

# **For Reference**

---

**NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM**

EX LIBRIS  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAENSIS











THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MILITANCY, WAR, AND WARRIORS IN THE  
DRAMATIC WORKS OF GEORG KAISER

by

ROGER BRUCE BENTON



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1975



## ABSTRACT

Kaiser's treatment of militarism encapsulates much of his thought concerning human civilization, for war epitomizes man at his worst and must therefore be countered--in the equilibrium demanded by Kaiser's dialectic--by the vision of man at his noble best. The result, in the dramas to be considered in this study, is the presence, within the scope of a single work, of both positive and negative poles in Kaiser's "Weltanschauung."

To the end of his life Kaiser relied heavily on the "Redeemer" figure of Expressionism in his dramas. Biblical allusions are frequent, and perfected man is evoked through analogy with Christ. This is not to say that Kaiser espoused the beliefs of Christianity, but rather that he felt a strong personal affinity with the figure of the suffering Christ and found in Christ's Passion a fund of powerful, universally understood topoi which enabled him essentially to deify his human ideal, and correspondingly to depict as truly satanic the opposite pole presented by militarism. Accordingly we shall also note the constant borrowing from the Bible of familiar images of evil, such as darkness, plague and tempest.

Kaiser embodies his vision of ideal humanity in a noble individual striving for self-realization in an imperfect society. We are to infer that this individual is the



representative figure for all human aspirations. The negative pole is similarly portrayed, so that a characteristic structure evolves, whereby Kaiser pits the champion of good against the champion of evil, with humanity in general, whose collective soul is the object of contention, presented as a chorus swaying now to the one side, now to the other.

In view of the importance of the representative individual for Kaiser's technique of dramatic portrayal, the significance of the warrior as the representative of militarism need hardly be emphasized. Where the militaristic state itself is to be portrayed, Kaiser can use the representative warrior only when he also uses an historical setting. Those plays which are intended as commentary on the militaristic state in this century demand a different approach, emphasizing the sinister impersonality of the apparatus of the state.



## Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction.....	1
I Biographical and Theoretical Considerations Relating to Kaiser's Treatment of Militarism.....	3
II Technology and War.....	18
III Kaiser's Warrior Figures.....	46
IV The Social Consequences of Militarism: <u>Der Soldat Tanaka</u> , <u>NSDAP</u> , <u>Die Spieldose</u> , <u>Das Floß der Medusa</u> .....	105
Concluding Remarks.....	139
Bibliography.....	144



## INTRODUCTION

In a conversation with Julius Marx, one of his closest confidants, Kaiser said: "Die zutiefst Erschrockenen sind die größten Künstler."<sup>1</sup>

Kaiser evidently--and to a certain extent justifiably--included himself in both halves of this equation. He never doubted the value of his contribution to literature, and shortly before his death in 1945 he remarked, perhaps rather presumptuously, to Julius Marx: "Ich weiß . . . , daß ich ein Werk geschrieben habe, das nach objektiven Maßstäben verdient, in die Weltliteratur einzugehen" (IV, 623).

Kaiser could certainly count himself among "die zutiefst Erschrockenen," since he experienced the horrors of two world wars and had to suffer the indignities and outright persecution which the Nazis inflicted on those members of Germany's cultural élite who refused to collaborate with them.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Kaiser devoted a number of works to the consideration of those weaknesses in man and in society which predispose to militarism. Militarism as a theme is most prominent in a group of plays written around the end of the First World War and in another, larger group of plays written immediately before or during the Second World War, when Kaiser was in exile.

---

<sup>1</sup>Georg Kaiser, Werke, ed. Walther Huder, 6 vols., (Frankfurt/M.: Propyläen, 1971-2), IV, 616. All quotations from Kaiser's works will be taken from this edition, to which reference will be made in the text by volume and page number only.



A theme so central to Kaiser's personal and artistic life merits special consideration. Previously it has been treated as a matter of merely biographical interest or as one component in Kaiser's general "Weltbild." Ernst Schürer's book on Kaiser contains a chapter on "The Revolt against War" which provides a useful introduction to the topic. B.J. Kenworthy offers valuable insights into individual plays, but the plays we shall be considering he assigns to other general headings, such as "The Myth of the New Man." The dissertation by Adolf Schütz on the topic "Georg Kaisers Nachlaß" is chiefly concerned, as its subtitle indicates, with "Entwicklungslinien im Lebenswerk des Dichters" and deals only cursorily with the problem of militarism, as one aspect of "das Grauen des Lebens." Other dissertations consulted during the preparation of the present study include those of Hanns Fritze ("Über das Problem der Zivilisation"), Manfred Kuxdorf ("Das Bild des Menschen") and Viktor Fördauer ("Dramatisches Gesamtwerk"). Since these are surveys of Kaiser's considerable oeuvre in its entirety, the discussion of individual plays is necessarily brief. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyze in depth those of Kaiser's plays which are principally concerned with militarism.



## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO KAISER'S TREATMENT OF MILITARISM

Militarism, when put into practice, combines all the forms of barbarism which Kaiser found most abhorrent. At this point it will be useful to arrive at a working definition of this term. Webster's Dictionary defines it as follows:

Predominance of the military class or prevalence of their ideals; subordination of the civil ideals or policies of a government to the military; a spirit which exalts military virtues and ideals; a policy of aggressive military preparedness.<sup>1</sup>

We shall find in the course of our study that totalitarianism often underlies militarism, so that together they form an almost inseparable nexus. It is therefore worthwhile to quote also the definition of "totalitarian," which is as follows:

Of or relating to centralized control by an autocratic leader or hierarchy; of or relating to a political régime based on subordination of the individual to the state and strict control of all aspects of the life and productive capacity of the nation, especially by coercive measures (as censorship and terrorism).<sup>2</sup>

As an example the dictionary cites "Sparta's militarist totalitarian dictatorship." However, Hitler's régime in

---

<sup>1</sup>Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 2 vols., (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., s.v. "totalitarian."



Germany provides an equally good example of militarism and totalitarianism in action.

The plays to be discussed in subsequent chapters of this study range in tone from soaring optimism to the most profound pessimism; often these contrasting attitudes alternate within the same play. Nevertheless, the transcendental optimism of Die Bürger von Calais (written just before the First World War) is progressively displaced by a despondency rooted in inescapable physical reality. In the "Nachwort" to his edition of Kaiser's works, Walther Huder comments on this trend:

Vom Gesamtinhalt her wird deutlich, daß sich das Verhältnis des Autors etwa nach 1930, vor allem nach 1933, zur Umwelt, zur Gesellschaft und ihren Einrichtungen im Grunde nicht geändert, höchstens existentiell und politisch verschärft oder abgekühlt, zum Teil sogar, wie es vor allem die späten Gedichte zeigen, bis zum Haß verdichtet hat. Eklatant jedoch erscheint die immer deutlichere Zurücknahme aus der einstmals emphatischen Überzeugung des Expressionisten von der generellen Welt- und Wahrheitsbewältigung durch den Dichter. (IV, 739)

Kaiser's depression and his pessimism concerning the fate of mankind became so profound that during the Second World War he longed for death and even contemplated suicide. As Huder pointed out, he had by this time lost all faith in the Expressionistic vision of the rebirth of man, and no longer believed in the capacity of art to realize such visions, even on an ideal level of understanding.

The origin of Kaiser's gloom, the spectre against which he struggled, has its being in the combination of



three fundamental evils which for Kaiser have become inseparable from the human condition. These he describes thus to Julius Marx:

Die Menschheit hat drei Elementarübel kreiert, die zugleich Phasen der historischen Entwicklung, besser gesagt der historischen Dekadenz darstellen, nämlich: Kannibalismus, Militarismus, Nationalismus. (IV, 614)

The last two speak for themselves; in Kaiser's view they were completely interdependent. The term "Kannibalismus," as we shall see from the continuation of the same conversation, is intended metaphorically--it refers to ideologies which "consume" the individual, and ultimately the mass of humanity, by gaining control of hearts and minds; this is achieved through an appeal to the subconscious or through exploitation of the harsh circumstances in which people find themselves, and which make them vulnerable to persuasion by any potential "saviour," even one as unprepossessing as Hitler. Kaiser applies this analysis equally to Catholicism and Nazism and it is typical of him that he thus neglects to distinguish between the spiritual realm and the political. His ideals--and their negative complement--are sufficiently broadly based to over-ride such artificial distinctions. The relationship between Catholicism and Nazism--which Rolf Hochhuth would later document more closely and for which he would castigate the Catholic Church in his play Der Stellvertreter (1963)--is formulated by Kaiser as follows:

Auch der Katholizismus ist kannibalisch. Die Hexenverbrennungen waren der sinnliche Gipfel dieser Praxis. Später transponierte



man diese Lustgefühle auf den psychischen Sektor. Die Manipulation der Seelen durch Dogmen wurde zu einer Sache der Weltpolitik des Papstes. Ich halte diese Taktik für faschistisch. (IV, 614)

In this sense, the Nazi ideology was obviously "kannibalisch," and had its "sinnliche Gipfel" in the persecution of Jews, intellectuals and others whose existence discomfited the Nazi leaders. For Kaiser all phases of man's existence are dynamic; therefore our working definitions of militarism and totalitarianism, if they are to be relevant to Kaiser's thinking, must comprise root causes and future developments. For Kaiser there are in theory only two definable reference points: man's "fall from grace" and his salvation and consequent restoration to his proper position in the cosmos. In Kaiser's dramas we see humanity in a constant state of flux between these two poles, though generally much nearer to the Fall than to the Redemption.

The cause of this constant flux is the inexhaustible creative force,<sup>3</sup> called "Energie" by Kaiser, which ensures perpetual change in human society and thereby endows it with limitless potential, which may, however, be realized either constructively or destructively. This principle

---

<sup>3</sup>Kaiser's concept of "Energie" somewhat resembles Henri Bergson's "élan vital," but the similarity is probably coincidental, as Gunter Martens points out: "Ein direkter Einfluß der lebensphilosophischen Werke H. Bergsons ist allerdings nicht nachzuweisen; es dürfte sich . . . um Übereinstimmungen handeln, die nicht im Sinne einer Abhängigkeit zu deuten sind, sondern als die Ergebnisse einer gemeinsamen vitalistischen Grundkonzeption gesehen werden müssen." Vitalismus und Expressionismus: ein Beitrag zur Genese und Deutung expressionistischer Stilstrukturen und Motive (Stuttgart, 1971), p. 262.



underlies the dynamism in mankind as depicted by Kaiser, and despite its ambivalence, it provides his main source of hope for man's salvation. It comes to the fore particularly in the Expressionistic plays, whence the fervid optimism of Die Bürger von Calais, for example. Where it is supplemented--and Kaiser's faith in it destroyed--by an all-too-present, hostile reality, the result is deepest pessimism and suicidal depression. In the later plays, such as the NSDAP diptych and Das Floß der Medusa, Kaiser is retaliating against a reality he can no longer transcend artistically.

Before we attempt to analyze Kaiser's dynamism (or vitalism) in more detail and to determine its application in Kaiser's treatment of militarism and totalitarianism, we must realize that it is part of the nature of this dynamism--especially as construed by Kaiser--that it defies analysis. In fact, if Kaiser be taken literally (which is a dubious procedure), he may on occasion be shown to be contradicting himself. As Gunter Martens explains, referring to Kaiser's essays:

Noch weniger als bei den Lebensphilosophen wird man an diese theoretischen Schriften eines Dichters mit dem Anspruch herantreten können, in ihnen ein systematisch entfaltetes Gedankengebäude vorzufinden und eine klare Definition der grundlegenden Begriffe zu erhalten.<sup>4</sup>

This accounts for the seeming contradictions in Kaiser's works; in his application of a definition or in his

---

<sup>4</sup>Martens, p. 277.



development of a concept, he is consistent within a play, but not always between plays.

In Kaiser's interpretation, the idea of perpetual change is analogous to Goethe's "Stirb und Werde" principle. Perpetual movement must involve the rapid using-up of individuals, whose death is simply a product of the inevitability of change. Kaiser's prolific production was merely the enactment of this principle in his own life--ceaseless creativity coupled with a dread of stagnation. In his essay "Bericht vom Drama" (1926), Kaiser explains:

Das geschriebene Drama wird immer neuer Aufbruch in anderes Drama--in Gestaltung vordringender Denkenenergie . . . . Stillstand bei einem Drama--Rückblick mit Genugtuung--Rast am Wege: sind Ungehorsam im Geiste, der mit tödlichem Fluch belädt. Sich zeitlich einstellen--das Dauerndunendliche mit dem Popanz seiner Person verbauen--sich selbst als ein erreichtes Ziel setzen: sind Kennzeichen und Makel von Mißwuchs. Ins pausenlose Gleiten von Werden geschickt--eine Welle des Stroms kurz festhalten: ist alles, was menschlich erreichbar ist. (IV, 590-591)

This applies not only to the dramatist Kaiser, but also to the protagonists in his dramas, who make their contribution to the world by being subsumed into it, in the manner of Friedrich Hebbel's protagonists, but less passively. Seen in this light, dying can be a positive act, not a fate which is passively suffered; thus the death of Eustache de Saint-Pierre in Die Bürger von Calais is to be construed as death and rebirth in one--the perpetuation of Kaiser's "Idee" through the selfless striving of the individual.



A corollary, for Kaiser, of the notion of striving and ceaseless activity is that this force must be directed against an object whose resistance to it will cause a "Steigerung" or intensification of the force: "Das Ja überspringt sein Nein zu vollere Ja," is Kaiser's way of stating this idea in his essay "Das Drama Platons" or "Der gerettete Alkibiades; der platonische Dialog" (IV, 544). Without this opposition, the force would lose its strength, which would atrophy for lack of use; it would become vapid and directionless, even cease to exist. As Kaiser puts it: "Kein Strom hat Strömung, der sich nicht über seinen Wehr stürzt, sonst rinnt er in schlummernder Bewegung und steht eines Tages ganz still und verpestet seine Ufer."<sup>5</sup> This explains Kaiser's definition of drama as "Bedrohung des Zuständlichen" (IV, 575).

The positive force which is immanent in the blind force of change achieves a level of development and strength of expression which are proportionate to the resistance--or negative force--to be overcome. Accordingly, the desire of the dramatist to represent or symbolically evoke the pinnacles (or rather, let us say "wave-crests" since they, too, are impermanent and must be transcended) of man's achievement, presupposes the need to represent "das Zuständliche" as the most abject misery and depravity of which man is capable. For Kaiser--as for many other artists--the epitome of evil was war. Nothing else so

---

<sup>5</sup>Quoted after Hans Dieter Gröll, "Untersuchungen zur Dialektik in der Dichtung Georg Kaisers" (diss., Köln, 1964), p. 53.



completely brutalizes humanity or so totally destroys individuality. Therefore, ironically, Kaiser's most potent realizations of his vision, his nearest approaches to the human ideal, are called forth in a setting characterized by the worst horrors of war; and the figures who serve most effectively as foils to the idealized protagonists tend to be savage military dictators, surrounded by fawning minions and faceless soldiers--all equally indifferent to the sanctity of human life.

These polar opposites are brought together by Kaiser in what Martens describes as "die Konfrontierung des 'Oberwertes' Leben mit den Gegenteilstendenzen der Umwelt, der Konflikt, der sich aus der Hochschätzung des Elementar-Vitalen und der gleichzeitigen Einbeziehung der zeitgeschichtlichen Realität ergibt."<sup>6</sup>

The bestial reality established in Europe by Hitler was totally inimical to "Leben" as understood by Kaiser and many other writers. In Kaiser's works, to quote Martens, "wird das nicht gelebte Leben gegen die Zeit, gegen Gesellschaft und Tradition gewendet, wird damit der Vitalismus zur Basis einer bitteren Zeitkritik."<sup>7</sup>

Kaiser depicts a scenario with which he was fated to become familiar: totalitarianism becomes the accepted credo, with nationalism as its political justification and military dictatorship as its modus operandi; the soldier in his

---

<sup>6</sup>Martens, p. 276.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



uniform symbolizes the stultification, equalisation, ultimately the eradication, of the individual, through whom alone in Kaiser's view, humanity can progress. It is precisely under such hopeless conditions as these that Kaiser shows the irrepressible dynamism of mankind revealing itself through a shining individual who arises, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of human civilization.

Martens summarizes the main elements in Kaiser's dynamism as follows:

Nicht als ein ruhiges Gleiten und Strömen erscheint die elementare Bewegtheit, sie entwickelt sich vielmehr im ständigen Prozeß der Überwindung, entfaltet ihre inwohnende Kraft erst am Widerstand, der sich ihr entgegenstellt. Die aus diesem Widerspiel von Fluß und Stau, von Werden und Vergehen sich ergebende Dynamik ist . . . für Georg Kaiser das konstituierende Merkmal des Lebens.<sup>8</sup>

The formula by which Kaiser explains the dynamism on which his faith in mankind depends, he states as follows: "An allem Anfang war Energie. Sie wird sich aus ins unendliche Ende durchsetzen. Träger von Energie ist Mensch" (IV, 572). Kaiser also states that "Energie" finds its clearest expression in the form of literature, so that, according to Kaiser, the dramatist's role in this context is nothing less than to shape man's destiny. He is thus carrying out a divinely ordained mission:

Diese Hände legt der Dichter an. Zur Bewältigung seiner Aufgabe muß er sehr früh aufstehen: nämlich mit Weltanfang-- und sich spät schlafen legen: mit letzter Zukunft. Zwischen

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 278.



diesen Terminen liegt seine Aktion. Er ordnet. Er schichtet den Krimskrums. Er schafft Linie in den Wirrwarr. Er konstruiert das Gesetz. Er filtert den Sud. Er entschuldigt den Menschen. Er leistet Dichtung.

Ins Sinnlose baut sie Gerüst von Notwendigkeit. Wahllos vorgeworfenes Material verteilt sie zu Bau. Das Tiertum Mensch treibt sie mit diesem Willen zur Erfindung der Idee aus seiner Selbstschändung zurück. Noch die Engel am Portal senken die Schwerter vor diesem neuen heldischen Menschen. (IV, 577)

This essay, entitled "Historientreue" with intentional irony, was written in the Promethean spirit of Expressionism, but Kaiser was nevertheless aware of the enormity of the challenge:

Was alles die Menschen fertig gekriegt haben--unter sich, gegen sich--, man faßt sich an den Hinterkopf. Da ist Weltmord und Welttotschlag und Weltkrieg--mitten aus dem Blutbad zwischen Kirchen in den ahnungslosen Blauhimmel. Einer fährt Auto--der nächste leert Latrinen. Einer schießt--der andere fällt. In majorem humanitatis gloriam. (IV, 576)

Although Kaiser's belief in the Expressionistic vision of the new man diminished as the storm-clouds of Nazism gathered over Germany, his application of the typically Expressionistic format persisted. Thus, in the plays of the Second World War, we still find the supposedly representative (but in practice isolated, defeated and embittered) individual set before us as bearer of the all-encompassing, timeless, quintessential truth or "Idee". In a late play like Das Floß der Medusa, this truth accompanies its bearer into the abyss, whereas in Die Bürger von Calais the death of Eustache is treated as the proclamation of a new and better society.



The flaws in the Expressionistic "Weltbild"--viewed in the cold light of reason--must have been obvious even to the most ardent Expressionists themselves, but their response to any self-doubt was merely to intensify the zeal with which they propounded their vision. In the 1920's, therefore, Kaiser's essays preach the evangel with seemingly boundless confidence:

Expressionismus ist Kunst. Die Definition für Kunst: Ausdruck der Idee, die unzeitlich-allgegenwärtig ist. Nur mit geringsten Mitteln, die die Störung der Erscheinungen auf ein Minimum reduzieren, bleibt sie darstellbar. Die Ordnung des Wirrwarrs von Figur und Natur in die immanente Idee macht Kunst. Der Mensch (Künstler) weiß die Idee--er ringt um ihren Ausdruck. Erfolgreich nur im Expressionismus. (IV, 571-572)

Kaiser's faith in art, specifically Expressionist art, is equalled at this time (though this was to change drastically) by his faith in that humanity which it is the purpose of art to express; this he makes clear in the essay "Der kommende Mensch" or "Dichtung und Energie" (1922), in which he says:

Nehmen wir alles, was der Mensch tut, als Energieleistung. Energie ist das Wunder im Menschen--und dies Wunder wurde Blut, aus dem er schöpfte--sich selbst schafft. Der Mensch ist die Wirklichkeit, die alles ermöglicht--nämlich den Menschen. Die Ewigkeit zieht er in die Gegenwart--und öffnet die Gegenwart in die Ewigkeit. Das Ziel ist erreichbar. Es wird erreicht. Bestimmt tritt ein: das All seiner Fähigkeiten wird entwickelt--befreit aus dem speziellen Fall seiner Beschäftigung. Es verschwinden Talente und Patente--jedem ist alles offen--aus der Spezialität dringt er in die Totalität . . . . Er wird sich nicht aufhalten lassen. Fortschritte Einzelner werden von der Gesamtheit eingeholt. Der Berg wird zur Ebene, auf dem alle siedeln. Dann reguliert sich die Energie irdisch und erhaben. Der Mensch ist da!



Denn es gilt: nicht darauf kommt es an, daß der Mensch etwas kann--sondern darauf, daß er gekonnt ist.

Der gekonnte Mensch wird die Vision, die schon nicht mehr Vision ist--sondern real . . . .

Ich glaube an diesen Menschen--denn mit dem Glauben errichtet sich schon der Dom, der seine Gründe tief im Erdreich hat und mit der Spitze in den Himmel stößt! (IV, 571)

This also indicates that Kaiser's "Weltanschauung" is rooted in a duality or polarity which is a constant factor in it and is always the same, albeit variously expressed, as "Ewigkeit/Gegenwart," "Totalität/Spezialität," "Gesamtheit/Einzelter," etc. This duality is even more clearly stated in the essay "Die Krise des Theaters" (1923), in which Kaiser admits to a crisis affecting the theatre (because the need for light relief during the war had made of it a "Lunapark"), but does not admit to any such crisis in drama itself:

Das Drama ist in dieser Gegenwart wieder Kunstwerk und Kunstwert geworden. Im Expressionismus (in diesem Wort wird reinliche Scheidung gefordert und anerkannt--darum ist es tauglich) triumphiert Helle über Dumpfheit, Sprache über Gestammel, Ewigkeit über Epoche. (IV, 576)

Bearing in mind Kaiser's positive view of the individual and negative view of the mass, we can see that all of these formulations refer back to the fundamental dualities of good vis-à-vis evil, or essence ("Wesen," "das Wesentliche") vis-à-vis appearance or phenomenon ("Schein" or "Phänomen"). The dialectical structure central to Kaiser's works derives from this polarity.



The danger implicit in Kaiser's dialectic is that the opposite poles, having no middle ground between them, form an inherently unstable opposition of forces, each pole being the exact complement of the other, whose identity it can readily assume by a process of inversion. Eckart von Sydow describes this process as follows:

. . . Allen Einseitigkeiten ist es eigentümlich, daß sie sich in ihrer lehrhaften Reinheit nicht erhalten können, sondern mit fast unausweichlicher Folgerichtigkeit des Paradoxes in ihrem Gegensatz sich verwandeln.<sup>9</sup>

Thus negative can as easily triumph over positive as vice versa, in fact more easily, given the nature of humanity as Kaiser was forced to see it: "Der Mensch hat nur einen wirklich gemeinsamen Feind: den Menschen!" (IV, 613)--and given also the nature of good as he chose to see it: "Das Gute ist eine Sache des Geistes. Hier zählen keine Dimensionen. Das Gute ist insofern nicht meßbar. Es ist oder es ist nicht." (IV, 619)

This fatalism is typical of Kaiser during the Second World War (the statement was made to Julius Marx on June 18th, 1943). By this time he had long since accepted the notion that man is fundamentally evil, and thus had to conclude that "alle gewiß ehrlichen Bemühungen der Expressionisten, eine neue Gesellschaft zu kreieren, erwiesen sich zuletzt als armselige Eskapaden." (IV, 612)

---

<sup>9</sup>Eckart von Sydow, Die deutsche expressionistische Kultur und Malerei (Berlin, 1920), p. 9.



Under the foregoing considerations it is intended to examine plays ranging from the most optimistic to the most pessimistic in their presentation of militarism and totalitarianism and related problems. We shall observe that where the message is couched in optimistic terms, the method of dramatic presentation involves abstraction, complex structure, convoluted reasoning and a large measure of faith, all supported by powerful visual symbols; whereas it was possible for the pessimistic view to be presented more directly, since there was no lack of contemporary models for Kaiser to depict. In those plays where the models are easily recognizable, the "Tendenz" becomes obtrusive, in the NSDAP plays, for example. Otherwise the term "Tendenz" is hardly applicable; it is more appropriate to accept Kaiser's own declaration, that his works all proceed from the same "primal vision", irrespective of their setting:

Der Dichter sagt die unaufhörliche Wiederholung seiner ersten Vision, die ihn früher bedrängte, da sie gewaltig war. Er bläht mit ihr Figur und Figur, und aus jeder Zone und Epoche holt er sich die Träger für seine Vision, um sie überallhin hinaustragen zu lassen. (IV, 551)

True to his word, Kaiser puts before us, in the plays with which we are concerned, characters of Greek, German, French, Japanese and other origins, and historical settings ranging from the time of the ancient Greeks to the present day--and beyond that into the future. But whatever the settings of the plays, they all derive their meaning from the same source, so that however fragmentary and disparate



Kaiser's works may appear on the surface--as a result of the sheer dynamic force of their creation--they do in fact contain great unity and consistency of structure and argument when considered collectively.



## CHAPTER II

### TECHNOLOGY AND WAR

Kaiser's Gas trilogy begins and ends with despair. It begins, in Die Koralle, with the traumatic childhood experience which provides the motive force behind the protagonist's financial success. It ends, in Gas. Zweiter Teil,<sup>1</sup> with the annihilation of mankind following rejection of one last despairing plea for humanity.

In Die Koralle Kaiser familiarizes us with the plight of assembly-line workers driven to exhaustion in the factories owned by a Billionaire industrialist. In Gas, the soul-destroying nature of the workers' lives becomes the dominant issue, culminating in the revelation that the product of their labours is fuel for the military machine. In Gas II, Kaiser draws the only conclusion he is able to from his view of the military-industrial state and its machinations. The trilogy thus presents a social document which provides not only a general critique of the total mechanization of life, but also a frightening portrayal of the manner in which militaristic régimes may exploit this unthinking industrial mechanism for their own heinous ends.

The essence of true humanity is seen by Kaiser as unity in diversity. Beset by the pressures of his own

---

<sup>1</sup>Henceforth referred to in the text as Gas II.



runaway technology, man loses this unity or integrity (and with it his innocence) and becomes fragmented and demoralized. Kaiser describes this process in the essay "Der kommende Mensch" or "Dichtung und Energie" (1922) in the following terms:

Wie ist der Mensch dieser Tage? Noch fehlt ihm die Zusammenfassung seiner Kräfte. Das Wunder der Vielheit seiner Fähigkeiten wird mißdeutet: er unterliegt der Versuchung eine einzelne Fähigkeit auszubilden. Er wird Spezialist! Der Mensch ist vollkommen von Anfang an. Mit der Geburt tritt er vollendet auf. Nicht aus ihm kommt die Einschränkung, in die er später fällt--in ihn, von der Mißform unserer Daseinsführung verbildet, drängt sich die Bindung. (IV, 568)

Technology may be thought of as an evil djinn which, once released, proceeds to enslave its former master. The unholy alliance between technology and militarism, represented in Kaiser's symbolic terms by the energy from gas, thus finds a malleable--even welcoming--victim, an easy prey for militaristic leaders who wish to unite the people under the false banner of nationalism. This process is portrayed with a pervasive and sickening sense of inevitability, in the plays Gas and Gas II. Bernhard Diebold aptly conveys the mood and the implications of these plays:

Dieses Gas treibt alle Räder der Welt. Es ist der Hauch ihrer technischen Un-Seele. Es ist die motorische Kraft der ganzen Zivilisationsmaschine--treibt die Turbine aller Sklavenarbeit, strömt durch die Leitadern und Kanäle der ganzen mammonistischen Betriebsamkeit. Ach, es ist der Helfer aller Kriegsrüstung. Der Komplex seiner Symbolik umfaßt Militarismus, Kapitalismus, Industrialismus, Mechanisierung--jegliche Organisation zur Entseelung der Menschen.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Bernhard Diebold, Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), p. 66.



What Diebold refers to here as "Seele" is what Kaiser simply calls "der Mensch" or "Menschheit," and Diebold's "Entseelung" equates similarly with Kaiser's "Entmenschung." Thus Diebold's phrase "Entseelung der Menschen" would be a contradiction in terms for Kaiser, suggesting as it does a situation which cannot exist for him, namely the existence of a human being devoid of humanity. To misunderstand this point is to misunderstand the allegorical equivalences in all of Kaiser's plays, including the Gas trilogy. The workers here are to be seen as beings, but not as human beings. They are subhuman, mere extensions of the industrial mechanism. And despite the protestations and dreams of the Billionaire's Son in Gas, they are irredeemably subhuman--hence the need to invoke the new, i.e. newborn, man at the end of Gas, and hence also Kaiser's personal need to eradicate this sub-humanity entirely in Gas II.

The subhuman workers must be clearly distinguished from their inhuman taskmasters, particularly in Gas II. The latter are to be seen as corrupt humanity, in fact, humanity literally possessed of the devil, for Kaiser's conception of both good and evil borrows freely from that of Christianity. The particular form of corruption with which Kaiser customarily epitomizes evil is militarism, which, accordingly, he envelops in all the symbolism usually associated with the "powers of darkness" of Christianity. Just as in Christian terms the absence of virtue creates a void which invites the incursion of evil,



so in Gas the void created by the absence of humanity in this and all industrial complexes, is exploited as a matter of course by militaristic rulers for their own truly satanic ends. Viewed according to this interpretation of Kaiser's "Weltbild," the Gas trilogy may be seen to possess a greater unity than it is normally thought to have, since it collectively presents Kaiser's twentieth-century version of what is essentially the battle for the soul of man as medieval Christianity saw it. Thus Die Koralle provides the exposition, Gas the peripeteia and Gas II the dénouement, in which the evil of militarism engulfs mankind almost literally in fire and brimstone.

The expositional function of Die Koralle is to establish the menace of evil which is implicit in the vast industrial empire controlled by the Billionaire. Even the Billionaire's personal fortune is revealed as being founded on evil, for early in the play it becomes apparent that both his financial success and his philanthropy are illusory. Firstly, it is not he, but the physical double he employs as his secretary, who dispenses alms to the unfortunates who come begging on his "offener Donnerstag." And secondly, the secret behind the Billionaire's empire-building is not any positive skill or business acumen but his desperate desire to eradicate from memory the trauma he experienced as a child. His father, who had been a worker in one of those same factories, had been dismissed from his job when he became too worn out to continue with it. In desperation, he had deserted his



wife and child whom he could no longer support, whereupon the destitute woman had committed suicide, leaving the future Billionaire an orphan at the age of eight. He explains the force which drives him:

Rastloser Fleiß--rastlose Flucht. Mehr nicht. Immer weiter mußte ich, um den Abstand zwischen dem Furchtbaren und mir zu verlängern. Es gab keine Gnade, das hatte ich gesehen. Es hetzte mich vorwärts. Die Angst, die mir in den Gliedern fror, machte mich erfinderisch. Da stehen Maschinen, die haben meinen Vater ausgesaugt--die haben meine Mutter an den Türhaken geschnürt--die werden mich zermalmern, wenn ich sie nicht unter mich zwingen. Das Werk--mit seinen Maschinen--mit seinen Menschen zwischen mich und das Furchtbare gestellt--das hat mir die erste Ruhe gegeben! (I, 663)

Implicit in this confession is the ruthlessness with which the Billionaire exploits the workers who, along with the machines they operate, constitute a bulwark between himself and his childhood trauma. However, little is made of such opportunities for social comment, since Kaiser now concerns himself chiefly with the psychological machinations of the Billionaire, for whom a crisis develops when first his son, then his daughter, both of them suddenly overwhelmed with "Grauen vor diesem Leben mit seiner Peinigung und Unterdrückung" (I, 677), defect from the luxurious milieu in which he has cosseted them, and dedicate themselves to the cause of the oppressed workers, she as a nurse, he as a humble co-worker.

The son's conversion provides the transition to the play Gas. He has inherited his father's industrial empire but, true to his social convictions, serves only nominally as



its head, since the entire concern is now run on strict egalitarian principles, with each worker entitled to a share of the profits which increases with age. Although there is no poverty, life has changed little for the workers, whose avarice has made them the slaves of technology just as surely as in the days of the Billionaire capitalist--in fact more so, since their enslavement is now self-inflicted.

All the factories are now geared exclusively to the production of a new type of fuel, analogous to atomic power, on which the world's industries depend: "Kohle und Wasserkraft sind überboten. Die neue Energie bewegt neue Millionen Maschinen mit mächtigerem Antrieb. Wir schaffen ihn. Unser Gas speist die Technik der Welt!" (II, 12)

The statement expresses the Clerk's confidence in the technological system, but already in this, the first scene of the play, the seeds of doubt are sown by the White Gentleman, representative of powers beyond human ken, who speculates on the possibility of a catastrophic explosion, which he refers to as "das weiße Entsetzen" (II, 13).

Immediately afterwards a worker reports that monitoring devices show an increasing threat of explosion. The Billionaire's Son has to curtail his daughter's wedding celebrations and hastily sends her and her husband, an army officer, on their way.

The Engineer is helpless to stop the ominous developments; his formula for the production of gas is faultless



and yet an explosion is imminent:

Stimmt--und stimmt nicht! An die Grenze sind wir gestoßen.  
 Stimmt--und stimmt nicht! Dahinter dringt kein Exempel.  
 Stimmt--und stimmt nicht! Das rechnet sich selbst weiter  
 und stülpt sich gegen uns. Stimmt--und stimmt nicht! . . .  
 Es kommt, was nicht kommen kann--und dennoch kommt! (II, 16-17)

The Billionaire's Son draws the unavoidable conclusion from the disaster: the explosion has cleared the way for a complete change of direction: "Das weiße Entsetzen--das mußte uns den Stoß geben--kräftig--um uns über ein Jahrtausend vorwärts zu schleudern!" (II, 19) He realizes that the fate of the world is in his hands, that he must persuade others to heed the warning. He urges the Clerk: "Sie sollten gewarnt sein. Es machte sich ungeheuerlich genug, als es hier donnernd aufflog!--Wollen Sie in das weiße Entsetzen umkehren?" (II, 20) However, the Clerk knows nothing of the world beyond his profession, and is incapable of making judgements or decisions. The Billionaire's Son does no better with the factory workers; once again he explains desperately: "Über Menschenmaß ging es hinaus. Das Hirn des Ingenieurs hat das Äußerste berechnet. Dahinter wogen Gewalten ohne Kontrolle. Der Fehler wird von jenseits diktiert." (II, 22) Finally, when the workers still insist that all will be well in the production of gas if the Engineer is dismissed, the Billionaire's Son resorts to pleading: "Kehrt um--kehrt um, die Warnung dröhnte--sie sprengte die Luft voneinander und krachte mit Getöse auf uns nieder!--Umkehr--Umkehr!!" (II, 22) But his plea falls



on deaf ears, and all he can do is wonder at the effect of so many years of repetitive labour on what might have been fulfilled human beings: "Graut euch nicht? Vor der Verstümmelung, die ihr an euch selbst anrichtet? Ihr Wunderwesen--ihr Vielfältigen--ihr Menschen?!" (II, 23)

The first social revolution enacted by the Billionaire's Son--the sharing of profits--has evidently failed, but the tabula rasa left in the wake of the explosion has stimulated plans for another kind of revolution--return to a simple agricultural economy. He tries to enlist the aid of the Engineer in drawing up plans for his proposed settlement, a shrine from which roads would radiate carrying workers-turned-missionaries, who would preach the Arcadian evangel of the Billionaire's Son (II, 26). However, the Engineer's professional dignity is insulted by such a suggestion, and he will have none of it.

In Act III the Billionaire's Son is visited by five Gentlemen in Black--all identical caricatures of businessmen--whose factory workers are on strike in sympathy with those at the plant operated by the Billionaire's Son. The Gentlemen in Black insist on the resumption of gas production. If the Engineer is the problem, he can be replaced, for despite the explosion, the formula is a proven one and can be applied by any Engineer. The frequency of explosions would then be known and could be handled, like the first one, simply as a matter of book-keeping:



Zweiter Schwarzer Herr: Die Katastrophe ist ein schwarzes  
Blatt--

Vierter Schwarzer Herr: Wir buchen sie--

Fünfter Schwarzer Herr: --und überschlagen die Seite! (II, 35)

All that matters to the Gentlemen in Black is the continuance  
of the supply of gas to the world's industry:

Erster Schwarzer Herr: Schließlich kann doch die Technik der  
Welt nicht stillstehen!

Dritter Schwarzer Herr: Die vollständig abhängig ist von  
Gas! (II, 35)

Technological progress develops a momentum which must not be  
hindered; the very success of the Billionaire's Son places  
him, as far as the Gentlemen in Black are concerned, under  
an inescapable moral obligation: "Sie haben die höchste  
Entwicklung der Technik herbeigeführt. Jetzt müssen Sie  
Gas liefern!" (II, 36) Naturally they are aghast at his  
proposal for simple homesteads. The ideas of the Billionaire's  
Son are lost on the Gentlemen in Black, who leave with an  
ultimatum: they will have recourse to the government if  
nothing is done by evening to secure a return to work.

Act IV of Gas opens with an assembly of the workers,  
among them some of the women bereaved by the explosion.  
Each of the women describes how her loved one--a brother,  
a son, a husband--was reduced to an automaton by his work  
in the factory. Where once the machine was a functional  
extension of the man, the man is now an accessory to the  
machine he operates, his whole being absorbed into the one  
limb with which he performs his allotted task. Yet the



women, and the workers who take up the cry after them, ask only for the dismissal of this particular Engineer. They cannot see beyond this single instance, because their minds have atrophied as much as their bodies. Their collective vow is: "Kein Gas!!--Mit diesem Ingenieur!!" (II, 44)

When the Billionaire's Son emerges from the crowd, he chides the workers for demanding so little, and for not realizing that this and future explosions are beyond the scope of any formula, beyond the control of any Engineer. He tries to kindle within them the desire for the wholeness of human experience, to make them understand that by the time of the explosion, the workers were already crippled by the nature of their work and their blind devotion to it:

Was ist die Explosion furchtbar? Was zerriß oder verbrannte sie? Zischte sie nach einem von euch--der nicht schon verstümmelt vor aller Explosion war? . . . Erschlagen wart ihr vor dem Einsturz--verwundet vor dem Einschlag--: mit einem Fuß--mit einer Hand--mit heißen Augen im toten Kopf wart ihr vorher Krüppel! (II, 46)

He tries to convince the workers with vivid images of what simple, contented lives they could lead if they would follow him:

Menschen seid ihr--im Bruder--im Sohn--im Mann! Fließende Vielheit aus euch zu jedem um euch. Keiner ist Teil--in Gemeinschaft vollkommen der einzelne. Wie ein Leib ist das Ganze--und das ist ein Leib! - - Sammelt euch aus der Zerstreuung--und aus der Verletzung heilt euch: - - seid Menschen!! . . . Menschen in Einheit und Fülle seid ihr morgen! - - Triften von Breite in Grüne sind neuer Bezirk! Über Schutt und Trümmer, die liegen, erstreckt sich die Siedlung. Ihr seid alle entlassen aus Fron und Gewinn!--Siedler mit kleinstem Anspruch--und letzter Entlohnung!--Menschen!! (II, 47-48)



Now the Engineer appears and pours scorn on the Arcadian visions of the Billionaire's Son, appealing to the pride and masculinity of the workers:

Kennt euren Sieg--der euch rühmt:--Gas!! - - - - - Eure Leistung schafft die Wunder in Stahl. Kraft stößt in Maschinen, die ihr treibt--Gas!! . . . Helden seid ihr--in Ruß und Schweiß! Helden seid ihr am Hebel--vorm Sichtglas--am Schaltblock! . . . Herrscher seid ihr hier--im Werk von allmächtiger Leistung--ihr schafft Gas!--Eure Herrschaft ist das--die ihr gründet in Schicht um Schicht--in Tag und Nacht--voll fiebernder Arbeit!--Tauscht ihr die Macht um den Halm, der sprießt, wie er sprießt? - - Herrscher seid ihr hier - - da seid ihr - - - - : Bauern!! (II, 48-49)

The pleas of the Billionaire's Son depict a world and a humanity so far removed from the reality to which the workers are inured that they cannot even comprehend his visions, so that the Engineer, appealing to their baser instincts, wins the day. The workers are determined to resume production of gas, even though this means progressing "von Explosion zu Explosion." It is as if they were driven by a death-wish, and, alone in the deserted hall, the Billionaire's Son declares: "Ich habe den Menschen gesehen - - ich muß ihn vor sich selbst schützen!" (II, 51)

In Act V we learn that the promise of the Gentlemen in Black to invoke the power of the state was no idle threat. A Government Official arrives with a mandate to resolve the deadlock and ensure that production of gas recommences. In vain the Billionaire's Son protests that more explosions will occur; he receives the bleakly official reply: "Die Regierung kann nur Tatsachen berücksichtigen" (II, 53).



Up to this point we have heard only generalizations concerning the use to which the gas is put: it fuels the technology of the whole world. Now, however, we find out for the first time specifically where its importance lies, and why the government has been obliged to intervene:

Die gesamte Rüstungsindustrie ist auf Gas eingerichtet. Das Fehlen dieses Betriebsstoffes würde die Fabrikation des Waffenmaterials auf das empfindlichste schädigen. Wir stehen vor einem Kriege. Ohne die Rohenergie von Gas wird das Rüstungsprogramm undurchführbar. Aus diesem schwerwiegenden Grunde kann die Regierung eine längere Unterbrechung in der Lieferung von Gas an die Waffenwerke nicht dulden! (II, 55)

The Billionaire's Son is mortified. "Waffen - - gegen den Menschen?!!" he exclaims, but the Government Representative gives no sign that he has even understood.

Defeated, the Billionaire's Son is left alone--"zuletzt allein wie jeder, der sich mit allen vermischen wollte!" (II, 57) he laments to his daughter, who has come to console him. When she asks him whether the danger is over, meaning the immediate danger to his person, he counters with his own despairing question: "Sind Menschen geboren? . . . Menschen, die nicht schreien und greulich drohen?" (II, 57) He unquestionably speaks for Kaiser when he confesses to her that he has lost the image of humanity which he had kept before him. This admission--and not his daughter's rather vacuous promise to give birth to the "new man"--is in reality the end result of the play, for Kaiser himself could not sustain his vision of humanity in the face of so many, and such potent factors favouring dehumanization and the growth of militarism.



The opening of Gas II gives brutal confirmation that this has been more than just a temporary setback, for humanity is now represented as a lost cause from start to finish of the play. Gas II portrays the last grotesque writhings of a sterile, spiritually bankrupt human race. The war for which the government was preparing in Gas, is now in progress. It is purely a matter of logistics, victory being dependant on the continued supply of ever greater quantities of gas. Display panels of green and red lights register developments on the various battle fronts and production of gas at the factory serving each front. Each console is observed by a nameless, robot-like Blue Figure who, in arithmetical phrases devoid of emotion, reports the data he is receiving. In each battle zone, the enemy advances in proportion as the production of gas decreases.

In view of the emergency, the Chief Engineer is summoned. He explains that the workers have been driven beyond their limits:

Bewegung wurde Gesetz aus sich. Übermaß von Dauer der einen Handlung stumpft den Ansporn aus Willen zum Werk. Gas ist nicht mehr Ziel--in kleine Handreichung verstieß sich Zweck, der wiederholt und wiederholt, was zwecklos wird im Teil ohne Ganzes. Planlos schafft der Mann am Werkzeug--das Werk entzog sich der Übersicht, wie der Mann durch Tag und Tag tiefer ins gleichförmige Einerlei glitt. (II, 63-64)

These sound like the words of the Billionaire's Son in Gas, but the Chief Engineer draws no conclusion from the state of affairs he describes except that the war cannot be won.



The outcome will be, as one of the Blue Figures puts it,  
 "im besten Fall ein Remis mit zwei schachmatten Parteien!"  
 (II, 64) Far from wishing to suggest a truce, he is content  
 to let the war run its course to the bitter end:

Kampf und Untergang. Angriff und Widerstand verbluten  
 aneinander. Gegner untergeht mit Gegner. Von Völkern  
 bleibt ein Rest, der entkräftet vergeht. Kein Mensch läuft  
 aus der Vernichtung. (II, 64)

The Billionaire worker is assigned his task: "zum Untergang  
 fanatisieren" (II, 66).

However, the Blue Figures have failed to reckon with a  
 last residue of human emotion. The momentary pause  
 occasioned by the change to an even more merciless tempo  
 of work, is sufficient for some of the workers to come to  
 their senses. The result is a strike which quickly becomes  
 a revolt.

Act II opens with the rhapsodic reawakening of forgotten  
 emotions in the workers. The Billionaire Worker rejoices  
 with them and echoed by an angelic voice from on high,  
 preaches universal brotherhood: "Land wuchs in Land--Grenze  
 stob ins All--Nachbar wird noch der Fernste--in Sammlung zu  
 uns sind wir verteilt an uns und ein Ganzes:--kein Gas!!!  
 (II, 76)

Their ecstasy is shortlived, for within moments the  
 enemy Yellow Figures enter the hall and demand immediate  
 resumption of gas production to serve their own industry.  
 For a while they have their way, but the Chief Engineer,



motivated by hatred of the new oppressors, has instigated another strike. The Yellow Figures leave, with a threat to shell the factory if production of gas is not resumed at once.

The Chief Engineer now reveals that he has discovered a deadly gas with which the new taskmasters can be destroyed. He does his utmost to stir up hatred and vengefulness in the stupefied workers: "Los die Wut, die faul trieb in euch. Los der Haß, der lungerte in euch. Los das Gift, das sinterte in euch. Ihr sollt vergelten!! (II, 83)

The Billionaire Worker emerges from the excited crowd, pushing down the hands reaching for the vial of poison gas. Now he urges retreat from the act of hatred and vengeance which they are contemplating. Instead he counsels stoical submission to the will of the victors. Better this, he feels, than further carnage. He discredits the scheme for an agricultural settlement proposed by his grandfather many years before. The workers should seek no material change, he tells them, but should become ascetics, suffering their fate outwardly for the sake of inner peace: "Richtet das Reich ein, das in euch mit Allmacht regiert!" (II, 86)

However, if the workers even comprehend his message, they are not prepared to heed it, having borne long enough with humility, toil and degradation. Defeated, and mindful of generations of earlier rejections, the Billionaire Worker is abruptly transformed; in a self-righteous outburst he claims the right to end it all: "Meines Blutes Blut schlug



nach Verwandlung von uns!! Mein Eifer tränkte sich mit Eifer von Mutter und Muttervater!! . . . Ich bin gerechtfertigt!! Ich kann vollenden!! (II, 88) Whereupon he throws the glass sphere into the air so that it shatters in the middle of the hall. A moment later the hall is destroyed by the artillery of the Yellows. The first of the Yellows to make a reconnaissance and witness the horrendous effect of the poison gas is crazed by remorse and revulsion and orders his cohorts to annihilate each other, for this must be the Last Judgement.

Thus the technological and military imperatives, abetted by a residue of human feeling expressing itself as pride, avarice and hatred, have led mankind into an impasse where salvation is no longer possible. Gas II depicts the headlong rush to extinction after the point of no return has been passed and the momentum of the descent into Hades has become irreversible. The apocalyptic ending is, as Gunter Martens puts it, "die letzte Konsequenz einer unentrinnbaren gesellschaftlichen Konstellation."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from the line of development we have followed from its beginnings in Die Koralle, through Gas, to its cataclysmic end in Gas II, that Kaiser does indeed intend us to see in his trilogy the inexorability of the onward march towards doom, given that the last chance offered in

---

<sup>3</sup>Gunter Martens, Vitalismus und Expressionismus: ein Beitrag zur Genese und Deutung expressionistischer Stilstrukturen und Motive (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), p. 275.



the pleas of the would-be saviours is rejected. In his usual manner, Kaiser pares away all variables, until he is left with only two, diametrically opposed alternatives; the rejection of salvation by the workers, representing all humanity, ushers in the apocalypse as the inevitable--and the only possible--result of their action. Obviously, such a simplified presentation (some critics might say reductio ad absurdum) of a complex process cannot stand up to logical analysis on socio-historical lines; nor is it designed to. Kaiser was neither sociologist, nor historian, nor philosopher (or perhaps he was all of those, but manqué), and his plays are meant to convince by the power of symbol, not by force of logic. The connections are not stated, but must be intuited. The entire constellation of ideas surrounding the interdependence (for that is how Kaiser sees it) of technology and war, is thus reduced to a single key symbol from which all else follows. B.J. Kenworthy is of the same opinion:

The gas factory stands . . . as the symbol of the whole complex of modern industrial society, the explosion and the ever-present threat of its recurrence for the wars of mass destruction, which seem to be inherent in an age of mass production.<sup>4</sup>

This apparent connection between "wars of mass destruction" and the "age of mass production" is the premise on which the Gas trilogy is based. For Kaiser the connection

---

<sup>4</sup>Brian J. Kenworthy, Georg Kaiser (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 62.



was self-evident, an insight he grasped intuitively. We can see in the plays under discussion that he equates loss of individuality with loss of humanity, also that he sees love and mutual respect as sentiments which can operate only at the individual level. Collectivism therefore stifles these sentiments and has the parallel effect of neutralizing the social conventions which, under more propitious circumstances, inhibit aggressive and destructive tendencies. The latter thrive on collectivism while humanitarian principles undergo a proportionate decline.

The operation of collectivism to the detriment of mankind is not restricted to modern industrialized society, but this is where its progress is most insidious and its effects most catastrophic. The entire process whereby collectivism develops and the importance and self-awareness of the individual is correspondingly diminished, is fundamental to our understanding of Gas and Gas II.

The process begins--and humanity is thus placed in jeopardy--as soon as it becomes difficult or impossible for the individual to apprehend his place in society as a whole. The workers' minds, in the Gas trilogy, are dulled by constant repetition of motions which are, in themselves almost devoid of meaning, and his conception of reality is circumscribed by his infinitesimal role in the operation. The result, as formulated by Georg Simmel, is that the worker can have no conception of the cultural significance



of the end product of his work, since his understanding is limited to the purely concrete reality of his own specific task. Simmel described where this limitation leads:

Dies gleitet mit den unmerklichen Übergängen einer rein sachlichen Entwicklungslogik in die Karikatur: in ein vom Leben abgeschnürtes Spezialistentum über, in den Selbstgenuß einer Technik, die den Weg zu den Subjekten nicht mehr zurückfindet . . . . Die Arbeitsteilung löst das Produkt als solches von jedem einzelnen der Kontribuenten los, es steht in einer selbstständigen Objektivität da, die es zwar geeignet macht, sich einer Ordnung der Sachen einzufügen oder einem sachlich bestimmten Einzelzweck zu dienen; aber damit entgeht ihm jene innere Durchseeltheit, die nur der ganze Mensch dem ganzen Werk geben kann und die seine Einfügung in die seelische Zentralität anderer Subjekte trägt.<sup>5</sup>

This "Durchseeltheit" is a vital aspect of the value which Eustache de Saint-Pierre places in his ideal of "Werk," as symbolized by the building of the harbour at Calais (see Chapter 3); with that we may contrast the completely objectified "Arbeit" in Gas, which does indeed serve a specific--and evil--purpose, but neither speaks to nor proceeds from the souls of the workers. The fragmentation of human life symbolized by this kind of work is diametrically opposed to Kaiser's conception of ideal humanity--harmonious in itself and at one with, even synonymous with, the Universal: "Der Mensch ist das All--allhier, allda--allfern, allnah--allseiend, allgegenwärtig. Dichtung proklamiert die Synthese Mensch! (IV, 568-569)

---

<sup>5</sup>Georg Simmel, Philosophische Kultur (Leipzig: Kröner, 1919), pp. 251-252.



The process whereby the fragmentation occurs, and the threat which it poses to the harmonious ideal envisioned by Kaiser, are further clarified by Hans Buchheim, who bases his explanation in part on a concept of Hans Freyer's:

Hans Freyer erläutert diese Problematik in seinem Buch Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters am Begriff des "sekundären Systems", das heißt eines Systems, das ausschließlich aus menschlicher Planung und Konstruktion entsteht, im Gegensatz zum primären System, das sich aus dem Wirken naturgegebener Kräfte wie von selbst bildet und erhält . . . . Das Zustandekommen primärer Systeme kann nicht beabsichtigt, ihr Verlauf nicht geplant werden. Dagegen sind die sekundären Systeme Produkte ebenso umfassender wie ins einzelne gehender Planung.<sup>6</sup>

If the secondary system--or worse, a whole complex of such systems--is allowed to gather sufficient momentum, we reach a point:

. . . wo schon so viele natürliche Bindungen und Verbindungen zerschnitten und so viele Quellen der Spontaneität verstopft sind, daß die ursprüngliche Ordnung gelähmt wird, so daß nichts mehr von selbst geschieht, sich nichts mehr von selbst regelt, was nicht nach Maßgabe des sekundären Systems geplant, angeordnet, organisiert und "durchgeführt" wird.<sup>7</sup>

At this stage the primary system and the human responses proper to it have atrophied to the point of non-existence:

Die Möglichkeit des Lebens wird nun dadurch erkaufte, daß an Stelle der Universalität ein bestimmter engbegrenzter Beruf tritt. Die objektiven Gebilde verbieten fortan dem Individuum durch eigene Arbeit selbständig anzufangen, drücken ihm von vornherein den spezialisierten Geist auf und

---

<sup>6</sup>Hans Buchheim, Totalitäre Herrschaft: Wesen und Merkmale (München: Kösel, 1962), pp. 95-96.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 130.



zwingen ihn an irgendeiner Stelle des Rädermechanismus mit kleinem und nützlichem Dienste einzusetzen--zu derselben Zeit, in der das Bedürfnis, den Sinn des Ganzen zu erfahren, am stärksten ist. Da aber dieses Problem . . . von den Voraussetzungen des . . . Rationalismus aus überhaupt unlösbar ist, . . . so bleibt das Verlangen nach einer Rückkehr zum Allgemeinen frommer Wunsch, und alle Anstrengungen, alle Überarbeitungen kommen schließlich nur darauf hinaus, die Arbeitsteilung zu vergrößern, bis die Menschen schließlich müde werden und an ihren eigenen Produkten zugrunde gehen.<sup>8</sup>

This is the process which makes robots of the workers, representing all of humanity, in Die Koralle and Gas, and ultimately leads to the annihilation of humanity in Gas II. Each Billionaire in turn is activated by this "Verlangen nach einer Rückkehr zum Allgemeinen" in his quest for "das Paradies, das hinter uns liegt" (I, 710). The goal in each case is essentially the same, but the Billionaire of Die Koralle seeks it for selfish reasons, whereas his son and the Billionaire Worker of Gas II act on behalf of all mankind.

This fragmentation of society is a centrifugal process (hence the aptness of the explosion as a symbol for it), in the sense that each human component of society is flung further and further into the void, beyond contact with his fellow-men and beyond any hope of regaining the centre, i.e., Paradise, the Universal, humanity "in Allheit und Einheit." Furthermore, this process--the fragmentation of society as a result of over-specialization--accelerates exponentially, feeding upon itself, for "die Formlosigkeit des objektivierten

---

<sup>8</sup>Emil Hammacher, Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur (Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner, 1914), p. 100.



Geistes als Ganzheit gestattet ihm ein Entwicklungstempo, hinter dem das des subjektiven Geistes in einem rapid wachsenden Abstand zurückbleiben muß."<sup>9</sup>

In other words, technology, as Kaiser sees it, rapidly becomes more and more autonomous, less and less controllable by those it was meant to serve. By virtue of its autonomy and its inherent dynamism, this product of man's reason develops into a power inimical to man. This irony concerning man's intellect is further clarified by Hammacher:

Sein Zweck [i.e. the purpose of intellect] ist die Bereicherung des Menschen, die Eroberung einer neuen Welt; indem er durch den Fortschritt selbst eine objektive Sachkultur schafft, die dem Individuum als beherrschende Lebensmacht gegenübertritt, zertrümmert er die Persönlichkeit, die er doch wegen der notwendigen Unfertigkeit seines Gelingens braucht, und arbeitet so an seinem eigenen Untergange zu einer allgemeinen Ermattung hin.<sup>10</sup>

Philosophy at the beginning of this century accepted dualism as inevitable, and under this aspect we can view Kaiser's seeming pessimism in a new and more positive light, regarding as stoical persistence his attempt to give form to a universality which he wishes to believe in but can never hope to substantiate either in life or in art.

Regarding Simmel's view as representative for the "Kulturphilosophie" of the time, one may see that Kaiser's Gas trilogy substantiates the contemporary definition of

---

<sup>9</sup>Simmel, p. 252.

<sup>10</sup>Hammacher, p. 99.



human civilization and of the dangers which threaten it:

Jene objektiv geistigen Gebilde . . . : Kunst und Sitte, Wissenschaft und zweckgeformte Gegenstände, Religion und Recht, Technik und gesellschaftliche Normen--sind Stationen, über die das Subjekt gehen muß, um den besonderen Eigenwert, der seine Kultur heißt, zu gewinnen. Es muß diese in sich einbeziehen, aber es muß sie auch in sich einbeziehen, darf sie nicht einfach als objektive Werte bestehen lassen. Es ist das Paradoxon der Kultur, daß das subjektive Leben, das wir in seinem kontinuierlichen Strome fühlen, und das von sich aus auf seine innere Vollendung drängt, diese Vollendung, von der Idee der Kultur aus gesehen, gar nicht aus sich heraus erreichen kann, sondern nur über jene, ihm jetzt ganz formfremd gewordenen, zu selbstgenugsamer Abgeschlossenheit kristallisierten Gebilde. Kultur entsteht--und das ist das schlechthin Wesentliche für ihr Verständnis--,indem zwei Elemente zusammenkommen, deren keines sie für sich enthält: die subjektive Seele und das objektiv geistige Erzeugnis.<sup>11</sup>

All the ills human society is heir to--and hence the tragedy of the human condition per se--were considered to derive from what Simmel calls the "Emanzipation des objektivierten Geistes":

Daß diese besteht, bedeutet eben, daß die Kulturinhalte schließlich einer von ihrem Kulturzweck unabhängigen und von ihm immer weiter abführenden Logik folgen, ohne daß doch der Weg des Subjektes von all diesem, qualitativ und quantitativ unangemessen gewordenen, entlastet wäre. Vielmehr, da dieser Weg, als kultureller, durch das Selbständig- und Objektivwerden der seelischen Inhalte bedingt ist, so entsteht die tragische Situation, daß die Kultur eigentlich schon in ihrem ersten Daseinsmomente diejenige Form ihrer Inhalte in sich birgt, die ihr inneres Wesen: den Weg der Seele von sich als der unvollendeten zu sich selbst als der vollendeten--wie durch eine immanente Unvermeidlichkeit abzulenken, zu belasten, ratlos und zwiespältig zu machen bestimmt ist.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Simmel, p. 227.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 253.



This exactly describes the process of which the end result is portrayed in Gas and Gas II. The Billionaire's Son tries to lead the workers into a realm of fulfilment ("vollendete Seele"). He hopes to overcome the predominance of technology as a "secondary system" and to induce a regression to the more primitive state of humanity where "primary systems" held sway. He does not realize, however, that such a state cannot, by definition, be planned; the evolution of man cannot be reversed at will. The vision of Universal Man conjured up by the Billionaire's Son is and has to be a mirage.

His failure is compounded by the continued operation of the dynamism inherent in mankind. This force does not cease to exist merely because it cannot find positive expression in the furtherance of "primary systems." It is as powerful as ever, but is now channelled into the service of the "secondary systems" which have filled the void left by the loss of man's primordial harmony. Society as portrayed in Gas is thus imperilled by the threat "daß die theoretische Objektivierung des Menschen in einen totalitären Verfügungsanspruch über ihn umschlägt."<sup>13</sup>

Kaiser's workers are already almost beyond salvation when we first meet them. Their condition exemplifies Buchheim's summation of the menace implicit in technology:

---

<sup>13</sup>Buchheim, p. 94.



Ein klassisches Beispiel der Verwandtschaft mit dem totalitären bietet das technische Denken. Denn jedes technische System, jeder Apparat ist in sich geschlossen, überblickbar, herstellbar, uneingeschränkt verfügbar und zweckmäßig. Einseitig technisch gebildete Menschen kommen deshalb leicht in Versuchung, auch das menschliche Zusammenleben nach den Grundsätzen technischen Denkens gestalten zu wollen . . . . Daß dies in Wirklichkeit die Vollendung eines totalitären Herrschaftssystems wäre, wird ihnen nicht bewußt.<sup>14</sup>

Society itself thus becomes a machine which has no aims or aspirations of its own, but can readily be harnessed to whatever aims are thrust upon it. The régime which governs such a society automatically wields total power over it and can direct labour to the achievement of its aims without the need to justify those aims. However, it is to the advantage of the régime to make their cause appear meaningful, so that they have on their side not only the manpower but also the collective will and enthusiasm of the people.

The Engineer in Gas--and in Gas II--knows how to rally the workers by appealing to the instincts of aggression, hatred and lust for power. He is applying the psychological techniques associated with "Kriegsbegeisterung." The success of these techniques is almost assured when they are used on a demoralized and disoriented body of people, such as the workers in Gas and Gas II. A healthier, happier populace, such as that envisioned by the Billionaire's Son, would not be so amenable to this form of persuasion. Alexander Rüstow explains this difference by reference to what he calls the

---

<sup>14</sup>Buchheim, p. 95.



"Vitalsituation" of the people. In the case of the rural population, whose lives are simple, peaceful and relatively free of stress, this "Vitalsituation" is healthy and rooted in strong traditions, one of these being the hatred of war or any other disruptive influence. By contrast, the often rootless and disillusioned city-dweller has little to lose by becoming involved in a war, but can expect to gain at least the spirit of communion with others which his normal life denies him. The blandishments of nationalistic leaders can easily endow this new-found communion with an almost religious fervour.<sup>15</sup>

Rüstow's observations make it much easier to understand the vacillation of the workers in Gas when confronted with, on the one hand, the exhortations of the Billionaire's Son to leave the factory and found a new "promised land" based on agriculture, and on the other hand, the determination of the Engineer that they should stay at their posts. It is also clear why it is the Engineer who must triumph in this confrontation. The workers have long since lost their roots in the countryside; their "Vitalsituation" is now that of the city-dweller, fragmented and disoriented, in need of a new-found self-esteem in pursuit of a common cause--which the Engineer can provide. He pours scorn on the proposals of the Billionaire's Son and appeals to the workers as an

---

<sup>15</sup>Alexander Rüstow, Ortsbestimmung der Gegenwart: Eine universalgeschichtliche Kulturkritik (Erlenbach-Zürich, 1957), Vol. 3, Herrschaft oder Freiheit?, p. 284.



army of heroes and conquerors. Although he cannot offer mobilization as such, his speech is calculated to arouse the same kind of zealous devotion to a common cause--in this case the ceaseless production of gas. In the similar confrontation at the end of Gas II, the Chief Engineer can be even more confident of winning the support of the workers, for this time he promises them world domination. Victory would release them from their lives of toil; the world's industry would now serve them and they could exact tribute from all parts of the earth.

Such an ending, if Kaiser could have countenanced it, might have been more plausible, but clearly its didactic impact would not have been what Kaiser intended. He wanted to show that man's hubris in blindly pursuing technological advances for their own sake would surely lead to the nemesis of a war to end all wars, in which there would be no victors. This is how we are to understand the last act of the Billionaire Worker as he breaks the sphere of poison gas within the hall.

Kaiser generalizes his image of modern industry in Gas and Gas II to cover all of society, and he stresses the demands made on the workers by their jobs to the point where their every thought, word and deed is pre-empted by the task they perform. Hardly any part of a worker's life remains his own, as the workers testify at the beginning of Act IV in Gas. As was stated earlier, Kaiser bases his



conclusions on such over-simplifications as these, and they must therefore remain suspect, however dramatically convincing they may seem. There are definite connections between technology and war, a belief which is supported by the cultural philosophers of this century, but Kaiser, by wilfully excluding all other interpretations, leads us to believe that modern industrial society is intrinsically militaristic and cannot, therefore, be educated to be otherwise.

In the next chapter we shall see that in order to overcome the pervasive threat of militarism, Kaiser must retreat from modern times to a pre-industrial age, in which militarism, instead of permeating the whole of society, can be isolated and destroyed. The key to this more optimistic assessment of society is the warrior figure.



### CHAPTER III

#### KAISER'S WARRIOR FIGURES

The plays to be considered in this chapter span a period of thirty years: Die Bürger von Calais was written in 1912-1913, Die Lederköpfe in 1927-1928, Napoleon in New Orleans between 1937 and 1941, and Zweimal Amphytryon in 1943.<sup>1</sup> Despite the years separating them, these plays show great uniformity in their treatment of military figures. All of them clearly reflect Kaiser's views on militarism and the militaristic state, and associated with all the warrior figures are the same--or similar--symbols, motifs and metaphors. This is in keeping with the findings of Ernst Schürer, who deduces from Kaiser's use of images "daß die Problematik, die ihn beschäftigt und die er behandelt, für ihn die gleiche und daß er bis zu seinem Ende ein echter Expressionist blieb."<sup>2</sup>

Each of the plays named above ends with a typically Expressionistic rebirth of man, the dawn of a new and better era for humanity, and to this extent all of the plays can be considered optimistic; and also in each one of them, the

---

<sup>1</sup>Dates given are those supplied by Huder in his edition of Kaiser's Werke, VI (Frankfurt/M., 1972), pp. 864-883.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Schürer "Metapher, Allegorie und Symbol in den Dramen Georg Kaisers" (diss., Yale, 1966). For our purposes, Kaiser's imagery will be discussed in the context of individual plays, but for an exhaustive study of this topic the reader is referred to Schürer's work.



evil to be overcome is militarism (with the added complication in Napoleon in New Orleans that the evil first has to be recognized for what it is).

The optimistic conclusions of these plays are in marked contrast to that of Gas II, where Kaiser could offer no salvation for humanity. We shall find that the reason for this difference lies in the degree of personalization of the theme of militarism. In the plays under consideration in this chapter, militarism as conceived by Kaiser is personified by an individual and is thereby rendered approachable and potentially vincible (quite apart from the aesthetic consideration that the plasticity which an otherwise abstract theme acquires through personification greatly facilitates dramatic presentation). In Gas and Gas II the Billionaire's Son and the Billionaire Worker respectively are the individual embodiments of humanitarian values, but their foe, the militaristic state, remains amorphous and intangible, shrouded in Kafkaesque anonymity, making known its demands through soulless functionaries who themselves have no power and exercise no freedom of choice. In such a situation no dialogue is possible between good and evil, and the state will proceed as it wishes, with the nihilistic outcome portrayed by Kaiser in Gas II. This is why the Gas plays remained Kaiser's only attempt to confront the state as such in a serious dramatic presentation, for he was constitutionally unable to see the state as other than a hostile entity, "in dem er ausschließlich eine Machtkonzentration erblickte,



durch die die Freiheit des Individuums obskurer Ziele wegen nach Belieben gnadenlos eingeschränkt oder vollständig aufgehoben werden kann."<sup>3</sup> Fritze attributes to Kaiser's subjectivism his failure to come to terms with social institutions--in his works or in his day-to-day existence. Certainly his apotheosis of the individual in his plays has its roots in his own psyche, which fact accounts for the special nature of the dialectic and its dramatic presentation in many of Kaiser's plays, as Linick makes clear:

Die Fremdartigkeit der dramatischen Dialektik bei Kaiser rührt zum Teil daher, daß der geschilderte Kampf nicht zwischen den Mächten der Außenwelt und den subjektiven Forderungen des Individuums ausgefochten wird, sondern zwischen entgegengesetzten Kräften in der Seele eines Individuums. Man könnte Kaisers Dramen geradezu als "dialektische Monologe" kennzeichnen, insofern als die agierenden Personen . . . Abspaltungen ein und desselben Menschen sind.<sup>4</sup>

This accounts for the preponderance among Kaiser's plays of instances where the resolution of the conflict is made to depend on the conversion of the central figure; we may see in such instances the emergence of a previously repressed alter ego. We shall observe the application of this formula in several of the plays to be discussed in this chapter--most notably in Die Lederköpfe.

---

<sup>3</sup>Hanns H. Fritze "Über das Problem der Zivilisation im Schaffen Georg Kaisers" (diss., Freiburg, n.d.), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Leroy Marion Linick "Der Subjektivismus im Werke Georg Kaisers" (diss., Zürich, 1937), p. 7.



Kaiser's capacity for thus presenting in a single character the combination of opposed principles, is the key to the nature of his primal vision, of which he says: "Alles ist die Vision--weil sie Eins ist. Das Eine, das an sich Himmel und Erde und den himmlisch-irdischen Menschen schließt" (IV, 584). Finally, the combination of factors which have been shown to arise from Kaiser's subjectivism, together condition his somewhat cavalier attitude to history and his treatment of historical figures and events. To quote Linick once more: "Das Bild, das sich Kaiser von der Vergangenheit macht, ist seine Legende . . . von dem Werte und der Bedeutung vergangener Taten für sich selber."<sup>5</sup> This is the essence of Kaiser's essay "Historientreue," in which he says:

Fließend und unstet sind Natur und Geschichte--beständig ist nur der Mensch. Mit dem Griff seiner Schöpfung, die Chaos zur Form zwingt. Die aus Witz und Wurf des Zufalls ein Bild schafft, das seine Teile nimmt, woher es sie nimmt: aus wuchernder Natur und wirrfabulierender Historie. Beide Materien operieren ohne Ziel und Zweck--ohne Tun und Talent. Sie sind da. Das ist nichts. Dem Unfug von Natur und Historie steuern--das ist die Arbeit des Menschen. (IV, 579)

Instead of selecting his subject matter direct from history, Kaiser often borrows from classical mythology or uses historical figures already endowed with the panoply of legend. His chosen figures he then mythologizes in his own unique manner. All the plays to be examined here are examples of this procedure.

---

<sup>5</sup>Linick, p. 95.



The power of myth is of paramount importance to Kaiser for the dramatic realization of his vision. His use of it in his plays is the practical corollary to the view of history quoted above, as can be seen from the similar tone of the essay "Mythos:"

Das wird Ziel von Kunst, die formt: Einheit zu wölben über Zerstreutem--Zerrissenem. Unaufhörlich wird Mythos erfunden, der Forschung nach dem Ursprung der Vernichtung der Einheit ist, deren verborgenes Vorhandensein die Kraft unserer dauernden Sehnsucht beweist.

. . . . .  
Niedrigkeit und Höhe--das rastlose Verlangen zu einem Bezirk seiner Wesenheit hoch und tief zu verdichten schreibt den Mythos vom Menschen . . . . In jedem Menschen, den er opfert--quält--martert, opfert er sich selbst, um mit Opfer aus Teil zum Ganzen zu gelangen. (IV, 554-555)

Kaiser concludes his essay with the statement that the effectiveness of myth derives from the power of symbolism, such that a symbolic object as tiny as the thorn in Sokrates' foot in Der gerettete Alkibiades can be invested with infinite significance.

Christian imagery provides Kaiser with a readily available source of powerful, widely understood symbols. They are used not in a specifically Christian sense but for their power to suggest immortality and universality. Die Bürger von Calais is a prime example of this technique and, like many of Kaiser's plays, supports Hammacher's generalization: "Alle Kunst hat einen pantheistisch-mystischen Character; sie erhebt durch Formgestaltung in der Totalität



der Erfahrung die Erscheinung zum Wesen."<sup>6</sup> Thus one of the elders of Calais, Eustache de Saint-Pierre, creates out of the set of conditions imposed on the citizens by the threat to Calais, the opportunity and the means whereby war and destruction may be vanquished in favour of a lasting spirit of harmony and self-sacrifice for the good of all.

The three acts of Die Bürger von Calais represent the three stages of the process of purification which Eustache de Saint-Pierre imposes on his disciples and, by implication, on the townspeople. In Act I Eustache is able to banish the spirit of militarism represented by the knight Duguesclins and open the eyes and minds of the townspeople to the virtues of humility and sacrifice. In Act II Eustache purifies the resolve of the six burghers who have elected to stand by him. In Act III, after a brief resurgence of doubt on the part of the townspeople, the spirit of pacifism is triumphantly vindicated through Eustache's final self-sacrifice.

The confrontation between the spirit of pacifism and the spirit of militarism in Die Bürger von Calais is foreshadowed already in the stage directions preceding Act I. Visually it is suggested by the bipartite symmetry of the scene before the town hall. Auditively it is suggested by the tumult which greets first Jean de Vienne, the mayor

---

<sup>6</sup>Emil Hammacher, Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914), p. 273. This statement is highly applicable to Kaiser's dramas right to the end of his life, but would seem rather too sweeping if applied to art in general since the time when Hammacher's book was published.



of Calais, and then Duguesclins, Constable of France, indicating their roles as champions of the people. Only Eustache de Saint-Pierre, sitting alone and deeply preoccupied with his own thoughts, is unmoved by the general air of excitement; already we sense the spiritual strength of this enigmatic figure. Eustache's inwardness contrasts with the bold appearance presented by Duguesclins, clad in black armour symbolic of his military calling and accompanied by a standard-bearer. When everybody has taken his position, the standard-bearer is in the centre and the colours of France dominate the gathering, suggesting that a decision is to be made on which the nation's honour and survival depend.

The auditory symbols of the "helle Glocke," standing for clarity or conviction, and the "Brausen vieler Glocken," standing for confusion and uncertainty (I, 523), are taken up again in Jean de Vienne's opening speech. He hints that the bell which summons the citizens to the council meetings may never be heard again because of the situation in which Calais now finds itself. The town is under siege by the army of Edward III of England, but still Jean de Vienne seeks a ray of hope for victory over the English. He believes there is still cause for optimism, since a force under the King of France is supposedly approaching Calais.

This speech is replete with the imagery which Kaiser customarily puts in the mouths of his characters when they



are describing wars and battles. By deliberately and skilfully ranging his images in parallel, Kaiser creates an equation of the French and English armies: they are alike in their destructive power and the blindness with which it is used. Through the complex of motifs surrounding the ideas of blindness and "Ungewißheit," Kaiser further extends the parallel to include the vacillation and uncertain motivation of the self-sacrificing burghers, as Eustache catechizes them in Act II.

The great unifying motifs throughout the play are the sea and the harbour, product of years of toil by the townspeople; around these are developed two complementary sets of images, connoting the irrational forces ("Ungewißheit") and the rational forces ("Gewißheit") which between them govern our lives. Thus war and aggression are symbolized by the savage, uncontrolled power of the sea, by the destructive force of its waves, and by the darkness of its storms, while the harbour, by virtue of the years of effort required to build it, and the protection from the sea which it now affords, symbolizes the steady growth of civilization and the blessings of peace. In this same speech we encounter still others of Kaiser's most powerful images. The storm, which at sea drives destructive waves before it, on land builds up clouds of dust and sand which blind those caught in them and darken the very sun. We are also introduced here to another of Kaiser's favourite images: the English



army is likened to a wild beast with Calais as its prey, held captive beneath its paw. Kaiser intentionally applies the same image to the French King at the head of his army--he is like a lion playing with a helpless hamster. The French army, like the English, is associated with storms, winds, clouds and columns of dust or sand which darken the sun. For war is to be seen as the common enemy of all mankind; national differences and nationalistic pride pale into insignificance whenever war becomes a possibility. It presents unthinkable horrors, but no solutions. This was and remained Kaiser's view of war:

Solange sogenannte weltgeschichtliche Entscheidungen durch Kriege herbeigeführt werden, werden sie von minderwertigen Menschen mit minderwertigen Mitteln herbeigeführt. Die Entscheidungen sind dann auch danach. Und die Probleme. (IV, 631)

Kaiser deliberately makes Jean de Vienne's opening speech highly ambivalent, partly to introduce the play's spiritual conflict between reason and irrationality, wisdom and force of arms, humility and pride; and partly to show that Jean de Vienne is a spineless politician, responsive to the moods of the townspeople because he is too weak to impose his own will--or even to know it. Not surprisingly, he bows to the prevailing mood of belligerence--and betrays the citizens of Calais to boot--by stressing the strategic importance of the harbour in the continuing hostilities against the English, instead of appreciating its contribution to peaceful trade and prosperity. Jean de Vienne's speech



merely exacerbates the prevailing mood of uncertainty, and the dismay of the townspeople is compounded when an emissary of the King of England reveals that the French relief force has been destroyed. All hope of further resistance is now doomed.

The fact that continued resistance can now result only in pointless bloodshed is important for our understanding of Duguesclins' speech, which now follows. He has to be restrained from hurling himself upon the English Officer; then he launches into a furious denunciation of the "lie" perpetrated by the English against France (I, 526-527). His speech, too, is filled with Kaiser's war imagery, which involves constant variation of a few thematic metaphors, using nouns, adjectives and verbs suggestive of blind rage and savagery. Thus the beginning of the speech: "Ein Raubfisch ist von England durch das Meer geschwommen--der wühlt an Frankreichs Küste mit hitzigen Schlägen die Flut auf. Jede Welle, die davon mit trüber Brandung auf das Land rollt--Lüge!" (I, 526). Symbolically, the sea is at the centre of the dispute in this drama between the pacifist and militarist standpoints, for like the harbour, it can be interpreted as either a hostile or a beneficent influence. As a crude and impetuous militarist, Duguesclins continues in the same vein, bound by his warrior code to demand that France preserve its honour by mounting a hopeless last stand right down to the last man. Any thought of armistice is repugnant to him:



"Und hätte der König von Frankreich seine Krone abgetan und sie dem König von England um des Friedens willen verkauft-- das Volk von Frankreich würde mit Strömen seines Blutes ihren Preis bezahlen und sie auf den Knien ihm wieder schenken!" (I, 527) He pours scorn on the stoical citizens of Calais for not being goaded into a frenzied final stand against the English King. The motif of blindness is especially prominent in this part of his speech, which also introduces another of Kaiser's favourite images: the military uniform as a symbol of lost individuality and hence of dehumanization; for Duguesclins refers to the emergence of the English Officer from the besieging army by saying: "Heute zuerst löste eine Rüstung sich los--dieser trägt sie!" (I, 527) The priorities in his thinking are evident from this. He blinds himself to the truth about the defeat of the French relief force, until confronted with one of its officers, wounded and exhausted. The latter relates, using the obligatory storm metaphor, how France's glory was swept away in the rout of her army.

Now the English Officer announces the terms on which the King of England is prepared to exercise mercy: "Mit dem Grauen des neuen Tages sollen sechs der Gewählten Bürger aus dem Tor aufbrechen--barhäuptig und unbeschuh't--mit dem Kittel des armen Sünders bekleidet und den Strick im Nacken!--So will der König von England den Schlüssel annehmen!" (I, 530) Failing this display of abject humiliation,



the King will "loose the storm" upon the city and destroy it. The "Aufbruch" when it finally comes is an act of triumph, the dawn of an age of enlightenment, heralded ecstatically by Eustache's father (I, 575). But here, in the words of the English Officer, the term "aufbrechen" is associated only with shame and penitence.

The response of the townspeople is predictable--an impetuous and emotional response inspired by the proud and defiant spirit of Duguesclins. Led by the two young brothers de Wissant, they shout their support for Duguesclins, following this with a cry of "Jean de Vienne!" (I, 531). The tumult is cut short by Eustache de Saint-Pierre.

Now begins Kaiser's plea, enunciated by Eustache, for reason to be allowed to prevail over force, the pacifist ethos over the militarist's blind emotional reaction. The confrontation of opposed ideals which now ensues is reminiscent of other, similar confrontations in Kaiser's dramas, for example, the dialectical struggles between the Engineer and the Billionaires of Gas and Gas II. But here, in this much earlier play, the dialectic is developed with infinitely greater subtlety to become what was to remain Kaiser's definitive paean to pacifism.

Jean de Vienne accedes to Eustache's wish that the council should formulate its response in the presence of the English Officer. However, the mayor is still under the influence of Duguesclins and speaks of the harbour--and the



work it represents--in terms of nationalistic pride. He seeks a spokesman for this attitude--someone who can find "Worte, die verweisen--Worte, die brennen--Worte, die züchtigen" (I, 532). He turns to Duguesclins for support.

The warrior likens the battle and the siege to a game--a parallel which Kaiser often puts into the mouths of his militarist figures.<sup>7</sup> The English have won Calais as their prize, but their vindictiveness will be answered, if Duguesclins has his way, with a desperate last stand:

Wir stehen auf den Mauern--bei den Toren--in den Straßen.  
Dann soll er durch sein Blut eindringen. Dann wirft der  
letzte Arm, den einer regt, den Funken aus. Die Flammen  
rütteln in den Häusern--die Wände schwanken und bersten--und  
mit stäubendem Fall sinkt die Stadt in ihren Hafen. Calais  
ist untergegangen--über seinen Raum treibt das Meer, das  
seine Beute vor jedem bewahrt! (I, 532)

This is the fate which humanity cannot avert in Gas II, but in Die Bürger von Calais the wisdom and spiritual strength of Eustache de Saint-Pierre prevail, though only after prolonged argument, for Jean de Vienne is eager to throw in his lot and that of Calais with Duguesclins. The first argument used by Eustache echoes Jean de Vienne's statement in the opening lines of the play (I, 524). Only the tense is changed, for Jean de Vienne sees the harbour as belonging to past history, whereas Eustache sees it as the foundation of a prosperous future: "Wir kommen von unserem Werke--an das wir unsere Kräfte hingegeben haben--wie an kein Werk. Die neue Bucht rundet

---

<sup>7</sup>See for example Gas, Zweiter Teil (II, 64, 77).



sich--nun sollen Schiffe auf glückliche Fahrt hinausgleiten!" (I, 533) He recalls Jean de Vienne's claim that the harbour had been built to serve military purposes, and his accusation encapsulates the conflict of ideologies in the play: "Ihr schiebt es [das Werk] in den Streit--und in des Streites Mitte. Das Werk gilt nicht--der Streit ist mehr!" (I, 533)

He now begins to erect around the harbour the mystique which is to justify his catechism of the six volunteers in Act II:

Nun legt sich euer Werk auf euch--nun begehrt es nach euch mit dem stärksten Anspruch. Sein Gelingen befiehlt euch mit dem härtesten Fron. Nun versammelt eure Kräfte--nun bäumt den Nacken--nun faßt den eigensten Gedanken. Euer größtes Werk wird eure tiefste Pflicht. Ihr müßt es schätzen--mit allen Sinnen--mit allen Taten. (I, 534)

The townspeople hover in wonderment and uncertainty until Jean d'Aire, echoing Duguesclins' conception of honour, breaks the spell by asking in disbelief: "Sollen wir in dem Sand von Calais die Ehre Frankreichs auf diesem Gange zertreten?" (I, 534), provoking another outburst from Duguesclins: "Aus dem armen Sande vor Calais schießt ein Baum auf. Der blüht an einem Tage. Mit Blut speist sich seine Wurzel. Sein Schatten breitet sich über Frankreich aus. Darunter saust es wie von Bienen:--der Ruhm Calais', der Frankreichs Ehre rettet!" (I, 534) His repugnant image of the tree, and his use of the "Schatten" image, can only serve to enhance the position of Eustache (in the minds of the townspeople and--still more potently--in the minds of



spectators watching the play). Yet another important image is hinted at here, for the mention of bees anticipates the "Stachel" motif, standing for emotional, impetuous and ill-considered reactions, which is important in Act II.

Unperturbed, Eustache continues, now stressing the temporal and vacuous nature of honour and glory as construed by Duguesclins. He tells the citizens that the harbour and the years of toil it cost them become a crime and a blasphemy if they now surrender to the vengefulness and misplaced pride of Duguesclins. In his own mind the only victory which matters is already theirs: "Kein Widerstand türmt sich länger auf--euer Werk [civilized, harmonious society] hat das Meer [barbarism, the irrational] überwunden!" (I, 536) Eustache is confident in his persuasiveness and, as the mood of the people gradually changes to support for him, all Duguesclins can do is utter scornful but ineffectual protests. Eustache now approaches him and chastises him without mercy:

Was fordert dieser Streit morgen noch von dir?--Morgen faßt du das Schwert an--du schlägst viele um dich--viele überwältigen dich!--Ist dieser Streit vor seinem Anfang nicht schon entschieden?--Dämmert noch ein Zweifel--quillt eine Wahl? Was bleibt dir zu tun? - - Du stürzt den Sturz deines Helmes vor dein Gesicht und bist blind und taub hinter dem Schild. So stehst du hier geblendet und betäubt!--Ein Dunkel umgibt dich, mit dem du deine Tat bedeckest . . . . Wo ist Mut, wenn sich der Willen von der Tat scheidet? - - Ich sehe ihn nicht!--Wo ist Mut, wenn seine Tat nicht bis an ihr Ende rollt?--Was gilt diese Tat noch, wenn sie sich dumpf zwingt? (I, 537)

Duguesclins' impetuosity and insensitivity are symbolized here by his armour and the visor of his helmet and by the motifs



of darkness, deafness and blindness. His desire to fight to the end is not the result of a carefully reasoned decision; it is bravado, not bravery. Duguesclins' element is the heat of the moment, not the coolness of reason.

At last Jean de Vienne repeats the terms on which the surrender of Calais will be accepted and the town and its harbour spared. First Eustache declares his own readiness to be one of the six. Then slowly five more come forward. Finally the brothers Jacques and Pierre de Wissant, hidden from each other's view, come forward simultaneously, making seven in all. This is one of several departures Kaiser makes from the original story as related in the chronicles of Froissart, but as was stated earlier, Kaiser is concerned not with historical details but only with the germ of a dramatic situation which presents itself to him in the historical account.

Jean de Vienne can now tell the English Officer that the terms laid down by the English King will be met. At this point Duguesclins, unable to comprehend this turn of events, takes his leave of France by kissing the flag, symbol for him of the national honour which he feels has been betrayed, and places himself at the disposal of the King of England as a mercenary. He thus belies his earlier display of patriotism and reveals himself as a bully who is happy only when he is fighting. This crystallizes Kaiser's general view of military pomp and martial splendour as a dazzling facade beneath which is nothing but pettiness and mediocrity.



As Ernst Schürer says, "if Kaiser's intention had only been to celebrate the heroic sacrifice of the historic 'bourgeois de Calais' and their pacifism, the play could and should end with the first act."<sup>8</sup> For in Act II Kaiser is concerned mainly with the implications arising from having seven volunteers when only six are needed. From Kaiser's point of view at least, this does not cause a break in the continuity of the play, since the same psychological forces are still active. The departure of Duguesclins signalled acceptance of the terms of surrender and removed the chief source of incitement to take up arms, but there still remain other forms of irrational motivation which are at odds with the act of self-sacrifice as Eustache envisions it. We are not concerned here with the details of the suspense and the process of catechism to which Eustache subjects the other six volunteers. The continuity of the play now depends very heavily on its ever-present imagery. After concentrating throughout the first act on the negative images associated with the abortive military solution, Kaiser now turns his attention to the positive symbolism associated with the harbour and the prosperous future it portends. The six volunteers must be purified of every vestige of selfish motivation and every suspicion that their sacrifice results from a rash decision; otherwise they will not be worthy of

---

<sup>8</sup>Ernst Schürer, Georg Kaiser (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 100.



the deed they are contemplating, for they would still be subject to the same dark, irrational forces which rule Duguesclins. The "Stachel" of "Ungewißheit" must be removed. The will and the deed must become one. Then the deed can be "eine klare Flamme ohne Rauch . . . kalt in ihrer Hitze" (I, 562), an act of enlightenment devoid of recklessness ("Hitze") or obscure or destructive motivation ("Rauch"). Eustache himself compares their state of mind when they first made their commitment with the impulsiveness which governs Duguesclins: "Warst du nicht so von deiner Tat vorher geschieden--wie er? Entzogst du dich nicht so dem schmerzhaft bohrenden Stachel deiner Tat--wie er?" (I, 560) Similarly, the crowd outside remains vulnerable to the effect of "Ungewißheit" and is on the brink of a riot because of the townspeople's impatience to know which of the seven will be spared. For Kaiser, their collective uncertainty merits the same "raging storm" metaphor (I, 563) as was used for the armies of England and France. A final reminiscence of Duguesclins occurs in the last act, when the townspeople, seeing the other six of the volunteers already gathered in the town square, lose faith in Eustache and suspect him of a betrayal. One of the citizens cries out for Duguesclins, forgetting that he has already deserted France.

As well as harking back to the first act, this episode foreshadows the triumphant ending of the play, for this rejection of Eustache is a fusion of Peter's denial and



Judas' betrayal of Christ, and therefore heralds the unmistakable Resurrection with which the play ends.

Whatever one's view of Kaiser's "Gedankenakrobatik," Die Bürger von Calais is a tour de force of dramatic structure and vivid imagery. Like leitmotifs in a Wagner opera, the images used throughout the play reappear in a cluster in the triumphal and ecstatic speech of Eustache's father as he glories in his son's exemplary death. The mood of harmony and universality is emphasized by the recurrence at this point of the sphere and circle as symbols. Drawn together as one symbol for universal man are the round harbour, the balls with which the seven drew lots, the circle of six which is disrupted by the seventh (I, 561), the round fruit to be understood as the fruit of the citizens' labours on the harbour (I, 551), and the "Anfang und Ende ohne Unterscheidung" (I, 576) through which Eustache's father inseparably unites the English King's newborn son and the death and resurrection of Eustache/Christ. Thus the blind old man is able to exult:

Ich komme aus dieser Nacht--und gehe in keine Nacht mehr.  
Meine Augen sind offen--ich schließe sie nicht mehr. Meine  
blinden Augen sind gut, um es nicht mehr zu verlieren:--ich  
habe den neuen Menschen gesehen--in dieser Nacht ist er  
geboren! (I, 577)

As an apologia for pacifism, the play might be said to have fulfilled its purpose by the end of Act I; but Kaiser wanted to go beyond the mere banishment of militarism and



show the dawn of a new age in which mankind would actively build on a foundation of pacifist ideals: for all of this he made the harbour his symbol. The spirit of Die Bürger von Calais may be summarized in the words of Emil Hammacher:

Der Sinn für das Wesentliche muß wieder erwachen. Da alle Arbeitsteilung Arbeitsgemeinschaft ist, so muß der zu Ende gedachte Rationalismus zugleich aus der Entfremdung erlösen; er führt, wenn auch der Konflikt zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft unlösbar bleibt, dennoch zur Erkenntnis der natürlichen Solidarität der Menschen wieder zurück . . . . Das neue Kulturideal kann nur heißen: Schaffung eines organisch Allgemeinen, dem sich das Individuum aus eigener Erkenntnis oder selbstgewählter Autorität unterwirft.<sup>9</sup>

This closely parallels the vision of the new man which Kaiser had before him all his life and strove to realize in his dramas. It is better substantiated and better prepared in Die Bürger von Calais than in any other of Kaiser's plays; in the other plays to be considered in this chapter, the new humanity results from the abrupt reversal of the status quo through the intervention of a god (Zweimal Amphytryon) or the quasi-divine influence of pure womanhood (Die Lederköpfe, also Zweimal Amphytryon). Neither device generates the degree of conviction Kaiser achieved in his "dramatic sculpture"<sup>10</sup> Die Bürger von Calais.

Asked about the genesis of Die Bürger von Calais, Kaiser replied that the play was completed in 1915 and that he had written it "wahrscheinlich als eine Art innerer Abwehr gegen

---

<sup>9</sup>Emil Hammacher, p. 122.

<sup>10</sup>Moses Joseph Fruchter, "The Social Dialectic in Georg Kaiser's Dramatic Works." Diss., Pennsylvania, 1933, p. 83.



all das grauenhaft Unanständige, das von der ganzen Welt Besitz ergriffen hatte" (IV, 608). However, the palliative effect of writing this play availed little against the horrors of the First World War, the effect of which on Kaiser's state of mind can be deduced from the Gas trilogy, in which he vacillates between escapism and bitter condemnation of the abuse of power by the state. To appreciate the depth of Kaiser's disillusionment, one has only to contrast the positive, harmonious and concrete conception of "Werk" (the harbour) in Die Bürger von Calais with the dehumanization and destruction associated with "Arbeit" and its sinister product in Gas and Gas II.

Events in Germany after the war were hardly calculated to reawaken Kaiser's optimism, and the plays concerned with militaristic themes are increasingly devoted to the condemnation through example (as in the Gas plays) of militarism in all its manifestations. The "rebirth of humanity" theme is no longer integrated with the whole scheme of the play as in Die Bürger von Calais, but now appears repeatedly as an artificial and escapist solution, a deus ex machina (literally in Zweimal Amphytrion) designed mainly as a device to suspend hostilities until Kaiser's next assault on militarism and the state.

The substance of Kaiser's criticisms remained the same throughout his life, so that statements he made in a conversation with Julius Marx in 1941, are applicable equally to the anti-militaristic plays written during the



Second World War and those written between the wars. In that conversation he says:

Nationalismus, das ist nichts anderes als die physische und moralische Vernichtung des Menschen. Sie geschieht heimtückisch. Die tragende Kraft des Nationalismus ist die Dummheit. Deshalb wird es schwer, wenn nicht unmöglich sein, ihn auszurotten. Der Repräsentant des Nationalismus ist der Offizier. Solange es Generale an der Spitze eines Staates gibt, wird der Nationalismus sein Unwesen treiben. Deshalb ist es, menschlich gesehen, eine Schande für jeden Menschen, Offizier zu sein. Wer Offizier wird, verschreibt sich dem Nationalismus und damit dem Verbrechen . . . . Den Krieg zu ächten, ist eine Scharlatanerie. Den Krieger, den Soldaten gilt es zu ächten. Solange es Armeen gibt, wird es Kriege geben. Die Soldaten tragen kein Ehrenkleid, sondern die Uniform von Henkern. In Sträflingskleider sollte man sie stecken. Sie lassen sich ja von Berufs wegen zu Dieben und Mördern erziehen. (IV, 615)

In 1929 Kaiser wrote the sketch "Ächtung des Kriegers" which is concerned with the same line of thought and pursues it with relentless logic. Kaiser believed that there should be no separation between the appearance and the deed (the "Schein/Wesen" dichotomy), so that the military uniform, however splendid, must be seen to represent the brutal nature of its wearer's profession. This much was clear from Kaiser's use of the suit of armour as a symbol in Die Bürger von Calais, and it becomes even clearer in Zweimal Amphitryon, where the splendour of the armour is stressed but its function (actual and symbolic) remains the same. This premise, on which "Ächtung des Kriegers" is based, is Kaiser's logical extension of a treaty drawn up by Frank B. Kellog, American Secretary of State at that time, which purported to outlaw war but contained no provisions for practical implementation. The



foremost of such provisions, according to Kaiser's Sokrates in the sketch, must be the outlawry of the soldier.

The sketch begins with Polemarchos enthusiastically describing to Kephalos the military parade he has just watched. The soldiers had been wearing their new armour, and the magnificence of the scene had been overwhelming: "Die Menge raste im Beifall, da hinter paukender Musik und unter wehenden Fahnen die Truppe vorstampfte" (III, 189). Throughout the parade, Sokrates had remained conspicuously unmoved. Later, when Polemarchos had invited him to his home, Sokrates had accepted, partly to avoid dining with Kellogos of Sparta. But the meeting occurs anyway after Kephalos issues a general invitation.

Sokrates condemns the pointlessness of Kellogos' pact and describes what needs to be added if it is to have any value: "Ich habe die Ächtung des Kriegers beschlossen. Wie könnt ihr eine Sache ächten, wenn ihr die Träger dieser Sache mit Ehren überhäuft?" (III, 192) Sokrates castigates not only Kellogos but mankind in general for the kind of timid and muddled thinking he sees in the pact:

Du hast mit deiner Ächtung des Krieges eine mächtige Lawine ins Rollen gebracht, aber auf halber Halde stockt der Ablauf. Durch deine Schuld. Du hast das R vergessen, das alles reinigt. Dein Krieger bleibt ein Ehrenmann--doch der Krieg ist Verbrechen. So nenne deine Ehrenmänner auch Verbrecher. (III, 192)

He concludes that what needs to be outlawed is "der Krieg im Krieger" (III, 192), for the identity of war and warrior



is complete, and what is applied to the one must be applied to the other. It is clear from this sketch and from Die Bürger von Calais that such symbols as the uniform or suit of armour do more than merely represent the wearer or one aspect of his person, they are that person, or rather that figure, for the symbol defines, delimits and typifies the figure, totally excluding any possibility of individual differences. Other examples of this technique are the leather hoods in Die Lederköpfe and the new suit of armour in Zweimal Amphitryon.

Kaiser's militaristic symbols are a complex study in themselves. Often one symbol is endowed with several related meanings, or the meanings of two symbols overlap considerably; and sometimes a symbol carries only the vague suggestion of a meaning. One could speak of his symbols as varying in exclusiveness of meaning and in intensity of meaning. Kaiser exploits to the full the entire symbolic spectrum at his disposal, for his medium is evocation rather than argument. In view of the resulting complexity, it will be helpful to summarize the range of distinct meanings--which is to say, aspects of militarism--which Kaiser connotes through his symbols. These include the following: the brutality or animalism associated with war (for which animal metaphors are used); the warrior's loss of his individuality (symbolized by the uniform); the warrior's insensitivity to other than militaristic values (symbolized by armour); the cult of the



military hero and the resulting inflated self-image of the warrior (both symbolized by shining armour and other military finery); nationalistic fervour (symbolized by the national flag or standard); and war itself--which often shares the symbols referred to above, but also has its own group of symbols, emphasizing destruction and the dominance of irrational forces; these comprise darkness, dust-storms, shadow, the colour black and other motifs which negate the light of reason. Kaiser sometimes uses a symbol in an exact and restricted correlation and sometimes uses his symbolic resource impressionistically, as an artist might use his palette of colours, to convey a more general idea. In Die Bürger von Calais Kaiser's use of symbol reaches its zenith.

In Die Lederköpfe Kaiser seeks to achieve by sheer impact what he achieved by subtle evocation in Die Bürger von Calais. Structurally and thematically, Die Lederköpfe is a far less complex drama; in fact its entire significance is contained in the single repulsive symbol which gives the play its title. The play's purpose, as remains very obvious throughout, is to provide the impulse for the moral regeneration of humanity by setting before the audience a catalogue of atrocities and perversions, orchestrated by a monster of depravity referred to simply as the Basileus (or King). The typification in this play is complete, all the figures (one cannot speak of characters) being designated solely by their rank and function within the military dictatorship. The King's daughter, who becomes the catalyst



in the process of moral transformation, likewise has no name. In Die Lederköpfe Kaiser presents not so much a developed drama as a "Moritatenspiel" in the medieval manner, designed to warn us by precept against the evils of militarism and totalitarianism. But Kaiser's proselytizing could do nothing to avert the rise of the Nazi dictatorship, which surpassed his worst imaginings.

In the opening scene of Die Lederköpfe, the City Commander, a flaccid sybarite, is being aided in the performance of his ablutions by numerous underlings. He typifies the sycophant who thrives in the shadow of a dictator, abusing the power vouchsafed him, indulging his every whim at the expense of the common people. Hitler's régime was to give Kaiser the opportunity for a more complete portrayal of this type in the figure of Ortsleiter Schmutz in Der englische Sender.

A Troop Captain enters and reports that his soldiers refuse to march in the heat of the day; they do not wish to share the fate of the thousands who, weakened by hunger like the rest of the populace, have been unable to withstand the scorching sun and have died. From the City Commander's point of view, however, obedience of orders is taken for granted, as predictable as the course of the sun. He makes a mockery of the mutiny and sends the Troop Captain away. He is fully aware of the privations suffered by the troops and by the rest of the King's subjects, but he accepts this as a fact of life in a military dictatorship:



Wovon lebt das Volk seit geraumer Zeit? Es werden die Felder nicht bestellt--es werden die Viehherden nicht gehütet. Wer soll Felder bestellen und Vieh hüten? Es ist Krieg. Der Krieg verschlingt alles. Er hat das Maul vom Krokodil. Es liegt im Schlamm und ist gefräßig. Niemals wird es satt! (III, 13)

It is odd--and must have been an accidental irony--that Kaiser here places what are clearly his own sentiments in the mouth of the City Commander, of all people. In Der Soldat Tanaka the same state of affairs is described by the sufferers, not by one of the taskmasters, so that the play's perspective is preserved and Tanaka's own ambivalent situation rendered all the more poignant.

The City Commander accounts for his heartlessness by saying:

Dem Basileus soll ich Trupp um Trupp schicken. Was er im Felde braucht, muß ich ihm hier beschaffen. Die Zahl muß immer stimmen . . . . Der Basileus gibt den Befehl--der Stadthauptmann vollstreckt den Befehl. (III, 14)

Thus, in his unthinking compliance with even the most odious and inhuman commands, he is analogous to the Engineer in the Gas plays, who likewise is indifferent to the human consequences of his actions.

When the City Commander says: "Ich brauche Kraft und Gesundheit um mich, um selbst kräftig und gesund zu bleiben," (III, 17) his attitude anticipates the physical cultism fostered by the Nazi leaders. He himself is so decrepit that when the mutinous troops come to take their revenge on him, he is incapable of fleeing, even if he dared to face the King's wrath. (III, 20)



The Troop Captain tries to divert the attention of his troops away from the City Commander by raising the wider issue of the effects of war on the nation at large:

Wie Narren und Hunde behandelt er euch. Er übertraf das Maß eurer Geduld. Aber an den Rand eurer Geduld stieß euch dieser Krieg. Ihr seid durch Leiden geschritten, die niemals erduldet wurden. Die Pest brach aus und nennt sich Krieg. Wie die Pest--strich sie an keinem vorbei. Draußen stürzten die Sterbenden und Verstümmelten zu Tausenden--wer hier ist, verendet im Hunger. (III, 21)

Again, it is clearly Kaiser delivering this sermon, which could not otherwise come from a warrior trained in the service of the brutal and dictatorial King. There now follows the familiar injunction to put an end to the war and go to work in the fields to produce food. The City Commander, by now almost hysterical with fear as the troops advance on him with whips, can only echo the Troop Captain's words, demanding, "wo ist Krieg, wenn die Krieger ausbleiben?" (III, 22) His question reiterates the theme of "Ächtung des Kriegers." When this ploy also fails, he disclaims responsibility for his own actions, saying that he, like everyone else, must obey the King or face death. Kaiser despised those who later used this as the excuse for their collaboration with Hitler, though he despised even more the leaders who used terror tactics to recruit their puppets: "Ein politischer Führer sucht sich mit Zwang Abnehmer seiner schäbigen Ramschware." (IV, 632)

The City Commander's last trick to save his skin is to offer the troops the chance to exact their revenge on the



King's daughter; at this the Troop Captain is so repelled that he withdraws his protection. But the City Commander is saved at the last moment by the arrival of the King, announced from afar by trumpets. His confidence restored, the City Commander changes his tone abruptly from abject pleading to spiteful recrimination, anticipating the punishment of the troops for their mutiny.

The King relates how his victory had been won. He had promised his daughter and the rank of Field Commander to whichever of his men could devise a way to take the city he had been besieging for years. One of his troop captains had worked out a stratagem which had brought about the fall of the city. He had mutilated his features so horribly that he had easily been able to ingratiate himself with those within the besieged city by telling them that the King had thus disfigured him. By this ruse he had been enabled to open the doors of the city to the troops of his own side. Over the remnants of his face he wears a leather hood. His face is now "entmenscht," as the King terms it, (III, 30) not only by its disfigurement but by its covering of animal hide (III, 42).

Although the King refers to this strategem as a heroic deed (III, 32), even he cannot bring himself to tell his daughter the real truth about what is beneath the leather hood worn by her husband-to-be, but pretends his face is merely painted. However, he has no thought of reneging on



his oath and even displays a perverse enjoyment first of his daughter's curiosity, and then of her revulsion when she learns the truth.

The full significance of the leather hood becomes apparent in the exchanges between the daughter and her husband-to-be. She wants to be able to individualize him as a human being, her husband, but she cannot because of his leather hood; as long as his face, symbol for Kaiser of humanity and individuality, remains hidden, she must look upon him simply as "everyman" (III, 36). She wants a husband she can recognize and love as an individual. What horrifies her is not his facelessness alone, but the fact that he disfigured himself voluntarily to serve the military ambitions of her father and so gain promotion (III, 38). He does not even exist as an individual with his own desires and ambitions, as becomes clear when he recites to her his articles of faith:

Er plant, ich bin das Werkzeug seiner Pläne. Er spricht den Befehl, ich fasse das Schwert. Dann ist mein Schwert gewaltig über dem Heer. Ich schicke es in die Schlachten, die Völker besiegen und Länder verwüsten! (III, 39)

The Field Commander is blind to all human responses and devoid of all ambitions except those implanted in him by the King, whose realm he hopes to inherit. The revulsion of his bride-to-be disturbs him only because it runs counter to the King's oath. In disbelief she asks him: "Verlangt er meine Schändung durch einen Lederkopf, der



jedermann und niemand ist?!" (III, 39) Later, in conversation with her father, she declares: "Es ist nicht einer, dem du mich gibst--es sind hundert, denen du mich überläßt." (III, 41) For without the facial features which would set him apart as an individual human being, the Field Commander is no more than a cipher.

For Kaiser the Field Commander's dehumanized condition epitomizes that of anyone in uniform. To don a uniform, to sacrifice individuality to uniformity, independence to subservience, was for Kaiser tantamount to complete abnegation of one's humanity. From the dictator's point of view, these values are of course reversed, so that the King can think of no better punishment for the mutineers than to fashion them into a whole troop of "Lederköpfe," who would blindly and unquestioningly serve him in further conquests.

In his next meeting with the King's daughter, the Field Commander expresses remorse--"vor meiner Tat--und vor dem Ursprung meiner Tat. Ich bin das Tier, das wütend ausbricht und zerstört. Mit Recht trage ich die Kappe über meinem unmenschlichen Gesicht." (III, 43) He wishes to end his life, but on the pretext that this would be contrary to her father's oath, she tempts him with the promise that she will honour the marriage, for she now looks upon the penitent Field Commander as the potential saviour not only of the troops who are to be mutilated, but of the whole nation: "Mit neuer Bildung dringt es durch--es strahlt von Licht.



In Blendung schließe ich die Augen--und sehe dich: wie du die Macht zerschlägst, die mit Zerstörung herrscht!" (III, 45)

It should be noted that "Blendung," which connoted irrationality in Die Bürger von Calais, now has a positive connotation: it is the dazzling light of insight which marks the moment of conversion.

At the wedding feast in Act III, the King is loquacious, but the Field Commander initially remains silent, often a sign in Kaiser's plays that the character concerned is gathering inner strength which will express itself in a direction new to him. Also typical of Kaiser is the way in which the Field Commander's first responses, when he is finally goaded by the King's barbarity to some reaction, take the form of short phrases heavy with the significance of his new-found insight. (III, 48) The King, however, is insensitive to this display of remorse, or to any other human feeling:

Ich bin gesprächig--aber taub. Die Taubheit bringt die Macht. Ich bin mächtig, wenn ich die Ohren vor allen Stimmen verschließe, die aus der Tiefe hallen. Wer ruft da unten? Ich gebiete Stille. Man duckt sich schweigend. Wagt wer Widerrede? Ich töte ihm den Hauch im Mund. Dem einzelnen--den vielen, die in Städten wohnen--dem Volk in Ländern--über alle Erde zieh ich den Mantel meiner Macht, der Luft erstickt, die ich allein in meinen Lungen atme. Die Macht ist Leben. (III, 50)

When the Field Commander beseeches him to spare the troops who had mutinied, and takes him to task for his destruction of all things human, the King merely mocks him



and brags that humanity and individuality do not exist for him:

Du bist ein Lederkopf . . . . Verlöscht ist das Gesicht. Warum soll es sich zeigen? Will ich euch kennen? Erhebt ihr Anspruch auf Bezeichnung? Ihr sollt euch selbst nicht kennen. Seid jedermann und niemand, die ihr wart und bleibt--mit Lederköpfen. Ich will Lederköpfe schaffen nach deinem Vorbild, Feldhauptmann, der mir als Lederkopf am besten diente--ein Volk von Lederköpfen ist bei dir versammelt, die ich in meine Kriege schicke, die verwüsten, wo Menschen mit Gesichtern übrig sind. (III, 52)

The Field Commander, his resolve strengthened by this display of megalomania, has laid his plans and now requests permission to carry out the mass mutilation himself, for which purpose he must borrow the King's knife. The silence which follows, unbroken by the anguished cries the King had hoped to hear, is explained when the entire troop enters and all of them remove leather hoods to reveal unmarked human features. The King is horrified--the more so as drums announce the approach of the Field Commander's "guests," "das Volk im Aufbruch" (III, 56). The Field Commander then returns the King's knife to him and invites the King to kill him, with the words: "Vernichte des Menschen Fratze, die ich auf meinen Schultern trage - - um dich zu vernichten!!!!" (III, 56)

The Field Commander's death is the signal for the troop of soldiers to descend on the King and beat him to death. His daughter mounts the table and exultantly rallies the assembled throng with the words: "Mit den Gefangenen in die Wüste, um aufzubaun, was in Zerstörung liegt!!!!" (III, 57)



The ending confirms the point which was made earlier, that Die Lederköpfe must be regarded as a spectacle rather than a developed drama. It remains a skeleton, which Kaiser has fleshed out only to the extent necessary for his purpose, which is to put before the spectator a compendium of the horrors and bestial perversions which, for him, are the essence of a military dictatorship. Thus the ending is perfunctory in the extreme--merely the briefest possible repetition of the formula for "Aufbruch;" and the daughter who repeats these words spares not even a backward glance for her father as he is beaten to death. By contrast, Kaiser allows full utterance to the King, so that he may reveal the monstrous depravity which results from the lust for military domination. He is the abstract essence of militarism, consubstantial with his symbol, the "Lederkopf." This is why Kaiser stresses, in the Field Commander's last words, the simultaneity of the annihilation of the "Lederkopf" with the annihilation of the dictator, for the two are inseparably identified with each other.

The play is therefore an example of the technique which was described earlier, whereby Kaiser combines the opposed elements of his dialectic within a single figure, who is thus equipped to undergo a complete reversal of orientation. The Field Commander's brutish militarism and blind subservience, symbolized by his leather hood and facelessness, are exteriorized in the figure of the King who dominates him.



The antithetical component, his human potential (announced by the awakening of shame) is exteriorized in the figure of the Daughter. The Field Commander has no substance whatever in the sense that we think of as dramatic character. He is simply a symbol which provides the theoretical meeting-point for an opposition of forces. No aspect of any of the three central figures in the play is developed in any respect which does not serve this mathematical scheme. Similarly, although the King is possessed at least of his own brand of depraved sexual lust, no wife or concubine appears, for there would be no place for her in the balanced scheme. The peripheral figures, too, are no more than satellites, reflecting the same principles as the major figures, but on a lower échelon. Thus the City Commander shows the same bouts of arbitrary and vicious cruelty as the King, while the troops who mutiny at the beginning of the play, foreshadow by this act the conversion of the Field Commander.

Die Lederköpfe impresses, then, not by any normal theatrical devices, but through our outrage when confronted with such a tapestry of militaristic atrocities. This may be contrasted with the feeling of reverence which Kaiser generates in Die Bürger von Calais, as the proper response to the spiritual values embodied in the harbour; or with the genuine pathos aroused by Der Soldat Tanaka. The difference in effect stems from a difference of intent. Die Lederköpfe, like Gas and Gas II, is designed to portray the degradation



of a society dominated by an inhuman principle. The meaning of these plays is contained in their negative impact. Such plays as Der Soldat Tanaka and Das Floß der Medusa, on the other hand, are intended to inspire us, through the martyrdom of a sympathetic and noble human being, to seek a better world. This necessitates a more complete and human portrayal at least of the central character, so that the play as a whole gains in subtlety and dramatic effectiveness.

In this respect Zweimal Amphytryon is a more successful drama than Die Lederköpfe, for although it portrays a warrior whose militaristic power-lust is as extreme as that of the King in Die Lederköpfe or of Duguesclins in Die Bürger von Calais, it also presents humanity in a more positive aspect and suggests that if the influence for good is strong enough, even the most recalcitrant militarist may be rehabilitated.

Zweimal Amphytryon enlarges upon Kaiser's premise in "Ächtung des Kriegers," that handsome armour and martial splendour cannot disguise, much less excuse, the brutal and destructive reality of the soldier's function. In the vainglorious figure of Amphytryon, Kaiser shows how the seductive appeal of military glory per se can so intoxicate the warrior that he is blinded to the ugly realities of war and comes to prefer the noise of battle to a calmer and more constructive life. The values of the conquistador--pride and bloodlust--replace the ideals of love and respect for



one's fellow-men. As Wolfgang Paulsen says of Kaiser's *Amphitryon*: "Die Uniform . . . wird sein Schicksal, verschiebt sein Dasein aus der menschlichen in die militärische Lebensebene."<sup>11</sup> Kaiser sets out to show that even in the worst of cases, this process is not irreversible, though it may call for no less a corrective influence than divine intervention. It seems that Kaiser's moments of darkest pessimism concerning mankind occasionally call forth his strongest faith in the power of redemption. The redeeming spirit in this instance is a combination of the strength and purity of a woman's love with the divine compassion which this noble example inspires.

The first act of the play is set in *Amphitryon*'s palace in Thebes, where his bride Alkmene anxiously awaits his return from the siege of Pharsala. Her messenger reports that all his efforts to gain access to *Amphitryon* have been brusquely rebuffed; the fall of the city means far more to him than does Alkmene (VI, 437). The messenger is to be rewarded for his efforts with two goats, which introduces the important symbolic figure of the goatherd, who will represent humility and honest toil, as opposed to *Amphitryon*'s coarse brutality concealed beneath his burnished armour. Also alluded to at this point is the possible intrusion of Zeus into human affairs when "Auserwählte" capture his attention (VI, 440).

---

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Paulsen, Georg Kaiser: die Perspektiven seines Werkes (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960), p. 78.



Among Amphitryon's wedding gifts, we learn, had been a suit of armour whose splendour had so transported him that he had deserted his bride without even consummating their marriage, and had set off for Pharsala with his men to dedicate the armour in battle (VI, 441-442). Alkmene's nurse sees Amphitryon's cruel desertion of his bride as reason enough to dissolve the marriage, but Alkmene's love for Amphitryon knows no bounds, and her only desire is to be near him; she would even accompany him on his campaigns if he would let her.

Alkmene begs Zeus in her prayers to let her die, since she cannot be with Amphitryon. She confesses that her own gentleness and humility are at odds with Amphitryon's belligerence and pride. It was not his glory and fame which first attracted her to him (VI, 446), and she wishes he might come to her as a humble goatherd, so that he might find her worthy of his love. Her prayer is answered at once as Zeus, who cannot resist this jewel of human beauty, himself assumes Amphitryon's identity and appears before her as a goatherd. Alkmene feels guilty because her prayer has summoned Amphitryon from the battle: "Du wirst den Glanz der Rüstung morgen missen,/die das Geheiß des Gottes dir verbot,/um mich als Ziegenhirt, der weniger/als nichts ist, zu besuchen." (VI, 448-449) Zeus reassures her and fulfils the substance of her prayer, for the real Amphitryon has forfeited his right to her love and Zeus has assumed



the human role he spurned. Thus Alkmene bestows her love on her idealized Amphitryon, but it is really Zeus who enjoys this human love whose purity had restored his belief in humanity. She is the chosen vessel in whom he will place his hopes for a better humanity. It is clear from Zeus' choice of words that even so depraved a being as Amphitryon will be included in this conversion of humanity from present waywardness to future harmony and innocence:

Blinde gibt es,  
die jährlings sehend werden. Taube hören  
den mind'sten Laut. So taucht es mir  
von deines Auges Grund entgegen--  
erschütternd menschlich, daß ein Gott sich sehnt  
nach einem Menschen. - - -  
Sei dieser Mensch du. Klingen will dein Herz  
ich hören, das so sanften Schlags  
doch aller Kämpfe Tosen übertönt,  
die sich die furchtbar aufgewühlten Menschen  
mit blut'gem Eifer liefern. Hoffen lass'  
den Gott durch dich, Alkmene, und den Gott  
dir danken - - - -  
durch schönere Geburt. (VI, 449-450)

This speech also anticipates the manner in which Alkmene will assist Zeus' betterment of mankind; as Zeus reveals at the end of the play, she is to bear him the son, Hercules, after whose example war will be outlawed and aggressive instincts sublimated to become the spirit of healthy competition and physical vitality fostered in the Olympic Games.

The nature of the dénouement is interposed here in order to show how Kaiser has constructed the play. Already at the end of Act I, which simply serves to provide a



brief exposition, Zeus has assumed control over the destinies of Alkmene and Amphytryon--as models respectively of all that is best and all that is worst in humanity. At this point Amphytryon has not even appeared--we know him only by repute--and yet his every action from now on will be coloured by what we (the spectator, Kaiser and Zeus) know but Amphytryon does not: that he has a "Doppelgänger" in Thebes. In this respect--that the fate of the militaristic element in man is effectively sealed by the end of the first act--the play recalls the structure of Die Bürger von Calais, in which Duguesclins and his warlike ethic were also overcome, to all intents and purposes, in the first act. In both cases, Kaiser is free to devote most of the play to consolidation of his pacifist position. However, in Die Bürger von Calais, Duguesclins, Kaiser's primary exhibit of militarism, is lost to view after the first act and must be evoked verbally when needed to illustrate a point. By contrast, in Zweimal Amphytryon the device of dramatic irony enables us to sense the victory of civilization over barbarism while we yet have vividly before our eyes the spectacle of Amphytryon's lust for blood and power. The Fall and the Redemption of mankind are presented concurrently, not consecutively as they would normally be in one of Kaiser's "Erlösungsdramen." This coup de théâtre lends heightened significance and suspense to the remainder of the play and ensures that the full poignancy of its ending will be felt.



Having in this way predetermined his theatrical effects, Kaiser takes us at the opening of the second act to Amphytryon's camp, where we see him borne in triumph on his shield back to his tent. His siege of Pharsala has finally met with success, and now he revels in the sight of the burning city. He likens his siege to a storm (VI, 451), just as it was "ein Sturmwind" (VI, 442) which tore him away from his wedding feast on this errand of destruction. In fact all the familiar symbols are present, including the wild animals whose skins form seats along the sides of his tent.

Before sacking Pharsala, he had offered them terms of surrender whereby their lives would be spared but they would be subjected to the most degrading enslavement. The alternatives of humiliation or military defeat are the same as in Die Bürger von Calais, where Eustache persuaded the citizens to opt for humility, but turns their decision into a victory. The same alternatives faced the workers in Gas II, but there, despite the pleas of the Billionaire Worker, they preferred military resistance to the bitter end. The citizens of Pharsala too, knowing what they face if they surrender, have fought to the end, only to face merciless retribution from Amphytryon. He glories in his boundless, flagrantly hubristic lust for power:

Soll der Mensch nicht  
in seinem letzten Stolz das Wirken der  
Natur zerstörend übertreffen? Ich--



ich fühle diesen Stolz in meiner Brust  
 und lass' ihn herrschen über mich--und unbeherrscht  
 mich dieser Herrschaft leihend breite  
 ich sie zügellos zum Zwang des andern aus.  
 Kann ich Amphitryon euch besser malen?  
 Laßt mich in solchem Bild lebendig sein--  
 und ausgelöscht, wenn ich mich jemals wandle! (VI, 453)

He adds blasphemy to his hubris, and thus taunts Zeus directly, when he says he prefers the smell of burning flesh to the smell of incense burnt in honour of Zeus (VI, 453), and again later on when he demands: "Doch/soll sich Amphitryon nicht eines Wunders rühmen?/Gleich ich nicht wunderbar so einem anderen,/der auch als Ziegenhirt erscheint?" (VI, 465)

Amphitryon's captains are now eager to return to Thebes and rest on their laurels, but Amphitryon thirsts for further conquests, especially since he despises his "Ziegensieg" over Pharsala. Entry to the city had been gained by tempting the citizens with the sight and bleating of goats ready for milking. As Amphitryon describes it: "Es haben Ziegen euch den Weg gebahnt/und nicht mein funkelnd Schwert und schriller Kriegsschrei." (VI, 455) He urges his captains to do more campaigning with him and he sings the praises of a warrior's life: "Was ist herrlicher als jedem/lebend'gen Menschen die Lebendigkeit/mitten im Leben dem Verlust zu nähern?" (VI, 456) He goes on to describe the intoxicating effect of power, of having masses of men under one's command, a horde of indistinguishable beings; his description recalls the "Menschenheerwurm" image in the play Die Lederköpfe, whose theme is reiterated in this speech:



auch die Denker  
 müssen mit allen aufstehn und verlassen,  
 wozu sie Eigenheit des Wesens trieb--  
 die Töpfer Weber Tischler--alle, alle  
 sind nicht mehr was sie sind, sondern ein Haufen  
 undeutlicher Gestalten, rasch willfährig  
 dem fremd'sten Tun--wie Ausgelöschte handeln,  
 die ihres echten Wesens sich begaben  
 und flache Schatten werden--tiefelos.  
 Da habt ihr sie in Scharen vor euch stehn. (VI, 456)

Amphitryon is abruptly brought to his senses by his captains, among them Alkmene's brother Alexandros; they all want to return to their wives in Thebes and Amphitryon is reminded that he too is missed--by Alkmene. For a brief moment he is filled with remorse at having missed a wedding night which the gods might have envied him. Indeed, Alkmene would be worthy even of Zeus, he adds, underlining the irony of this train of thought. However, these thoughts do not long divert him from his chosen way of life. Finding no volunteers prepared to spy out the land beyond the mountains, Amphitryon declares that he himself will do it, but first he must disguise himself as a humble goatherd, since he would otherwise be recognized. To the astonishment of all present, not only the goatskin but even containers already filled with food and water, are found lying within easy reach. None of them could suspect that the hand of Zeus might be responsible.

Meanwhile Zeus/Amphitryon, still dressed as a goatherd, relates his version of the aftermath of the victory at Pharsala. He reverses all the facts, claiming that it was



the captains who were determined to seek new challenges, while he counselled return to Thebes. The Elders are aghast at this report and agree to set off at once in order to call the captains to account for their rebelliousness. In this act also, Kaiser exploits to the full the irony of the situation, chiefly to make the point that when a man turns his back on strife and lives a life of love and harmony, he is not one whit less than a god. Love and divinity are made to seem synonymous. Thus Zeus/Amphitryon declares to Alkmene: "Du könntest einen Gott zum zweifeln bringen/an seiner Göttlichkeit, die nicht begreift,/was dieser Menschenmund auspricht," to which Alkmene replies: "Ich spüre/nur das Geheimnis deiner Göttlichkeit,/die Liebe ist." (VI, 476-477)

The Elders of Thebes bring with them to Amphitryon's camp the confusion caused by Zeus' rendition of events after the fall of Pharsala. The Captains are stunned when all of their own sentiments are attributed to Amphitryon, while they are called to account for the impudent and bellicose words which came from him. Eventually it is agreed that Amphitryon has duped them all, since he was seen in both places dressed as a goatherd. They decide jointly that Amphitryon must be tried in Thebes for his deceit. When he himself appears and recounts his exploits in the mountains, his story merely angers them all the more, and Elders and Captains alike accuse him of duplicity.



The purpose of Acts III and IV has been to put Amphitryon in such a predicament vis-à-vis the Elders of Thebes, that his credibility and his status in the city will be nullified, so that he can expect no clemency but will be thrown upon the mercy of Zeus.

As Act V opens, Amphitryon faces his accusers. At first he is beside himself with helpless rage at being exposed to the mockery of all the citizens of Thebes. Divested of the shining armour in which they are accustomed to seeing him, and clad instead as a humble goatherd, he is revealed as a human being after all. We begin to see that he is not inherently or wilfully evil--if this were the case, he could never be entrusted with the role of earthly parent to Hercules. As his resistance crumbles before the weight of accusations against him, he even begins to see the error of his ways, admitting that his own vainglory and the adulation of his followers had led him to act rashly and overlook such proprieties as consultation with the Elders before embarking on a new campaign. As he now realizes, ". . . wo/Ruhm wirkt, wird Ordnung weniger geachtet" (VI, 496).

Amphitryon, in his desperation, is the first to hit upon the notion that he may have a double (VI, 504), but his pleas only enmesh him more securely in the snare which Zeus has laid for him. When Alkmene announces that she is expecting his child, no avenue of escape is left open to him. She quotes again the words which Zeus/Amphitryon had said



to her: "Jetzt werd' - - ich Herr in Theben!" (VI, 508)

Zeus had meant that the godly spirit of love which had drawn him to Alkmene would henceforth hold sway over Thebes; but the same words attributed to Amphitryon suggest that he was planning to establish himself as a tyrant in Thebes (VI, 509). One of the Elders sees his actions as an attempt to incite civil war and anarchy. As he recalls Amphitryon's sudden appearance at his camp--as if he had followed the Elders there from Thebes--Kaiser interjects a phrase reminiscent of his aphorisms: "Er schlich/uns nach--wie alles wird erschlichen, was/sich bläht in Macht!" (VI, 509)

Amphitryon is sentenced to exile--and certain death--in the wilderness, but he prays to Zeus to strike him dead at once, while he is still in Thebes; whereupon Zeus, still clad as Amphitryon's double, appears before them. He denounces humanity for its bloodthirsty conduct:

Ihr habt den Tod geschändet durch den Mord,  
den ihr mit schaler Heuchelei umlügt  
in Krieg der Männer--männerwürd'ges Tun.  
Es ekelt einen Gott es zu vernehmen--  
blutrünstiges Geschwätz von Schlacht und Sieg,  
da Menschen über Menschen triumphieren,  
die den zerfetzten Leib am Boden schleifen! - -  
Verlorenes Geschlecht--verräterische Art  
geschaffner Wesen. Eure Zeit war um. (VI, 511-512)

He declares that he had been dissuaded from destroying all of mankind only by the strength of Alkmene's love, which had led her to pray that Amphitryon might come to her as a goatherd. The fate of all humanity rested on her



sincerity, for Zeus continues: "Und ich beschloß die Menschen-frau zu prüfen,/wie ihr der schlechte Ziegenhirt genüge,/der nur ein Mensch war--weiter nichts als Mensch! - -" (VI, 512) Alkmene passes this test, and through her, mankind is found worthy of a second chance.

Amphitryon himself is banished until such time as the baby Hercules is born to Alkmene. By then he will have completed his penance, begun already with his humiliation in Thebes, and will be a worthy father to the "Göttersohn." Hercules, after the completion of his labours, will found a new generation of man--neither warlike nor effete and slothful. His physical energy and competitive instinct will find expression in the Olympic Games:

Es soll die Lust am Kräftespiel nicht weichen.  
Doch Kraft kämpft wider Kraft. Nicht List mit List.  
Der unversehrte Leib sei das Gebot,  
dem sich die neuen Kämpfer willig fügen.  
Denn Kraft soll wachsen und nicht untergehn.  
So sind die Spiele von Olympia  
des Weges neues Ziel! - - (VI, 512)

In view of the importance of Alkmene's role, Wolfgang Paulsen asks:

Ist Amphitryon überhaupt der Held in dem seinen Namen tragenden Stück? Ist es nicht vielmehr Alkmene, die es erst von innen her aufleuchten läßt, indem sie auf all die unmenschlichen Vorgänge menschlich reagiert?<sup>12</sup>

His question is well founded to the extent that without her shining example of humility and love to countervail

---

<sup>12</sup>Paulsen, Georg Kaiser. Die Perspektiven seines Werkes, p. 78.



Amphitryon's destructiveness and hubris, Zeus would not have seen fit to extend humanity's lease. We may look upon Amphitryon as an anti-hero, since he embodies all the related evils of militarism: the false glory, the bloodlust and the blind indifference to the suffering of his victims. The real primum mobile in the play is Zeus, who may be seen as Kaiser's own "Doppelgänger" in this play. Certainly the poet was on this occasion very much in charge of his material, instead of the reverse being the case, as sometimes happens in Kaiser's plays, so that artistically the play forms a satisfying whole if it is approached on the same idealistic plane as that on which its action occurs. That Kaiser should have sought a realm of harmony by turning to Greek antiquity, is indicative of the torment and disillusionment he was experiencing during the Second World War. By invoking the god Zeus as a moderator of human excesses, Kaiser was enabled to substitute aesthetic harmony for the unattainable practical solution; to quote Otto Mann:

Die Antike trat ihm entgegen als die Möglichkeit schöner harmonischer Poesie. Es ist von der Antike mehrfach bemerkt worden, daß sie ihre Tragödien als eine so schöne Dichtung gestaltet habe, um dem Schrecklichen, das nun einmal besteht, standhalten zu können. So näherte sich auch Kaiser zuletzt dem Poetischen, um in der Form zu harmonisieren, was sich als Stoff nicht harmonisieren lässt.<sup>13</sup>

In Napoleon in New Orleans (written between 1937 and 1941), Kaiser harks back to the Nietzschean reverence for

---

<sup>13</sup>Otto Mann, "Georg Kaiser," in Expressionismus: Gestalten einer literarischen Bewegung, ed. Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann (Heidelberg: Rothe, 1956), p. 279.



the mythic warrior which was paramount in the play Der gerettete Alkibiades (1918). In the later play, however, the disillusioned Kaiser again comes to the fore and he renounces the falsehood which the warrior myth is shown to be. Again, as in Gas II, Kaiser allows a conflagration to end his play and destroy its protagonist and the stuff of his illusions. The reference to America at the end of the play introduces a note of forced optimism, but essentially Kaiser is here bewailing the fate of a tragically deceived Germany.

Napoleon was an ambivalent figure for Kaiser. In Das Frauenopfer, written in 1915-1916, he provides a powerful presence in the background of the play; he represents, like Alkibiades, the Nietzschean affirmation of life and strength, and the hero's vacillations between passivity and activity are conditioned by his allegiance to Napoleon.

In the two later Napoleon plays, Pferdewechsel (1938) and Napoleon in New Orleans (1941), the Emperor's greatness is seen as belonging to the past and persisting only in the minds of others, as an illusory image, treasured for dubious reasons. In Pferdewechsel Napoleon finds his self-respect again after being reminded of his debt to those who had sacrificed their lives for his sake. But this almost nostalgic revival of lost grandeur carries little conviction, since it shows Napoleon re-building his own self-image on the delusions of others. The result is pathos, and there



is no comparison (though Kenworthy makes one<sup>14</sup>) with the conception of the past laying a duty on the future as it is formulated in Die Bürger von Calais. Nor is there reason to call these plays "Napoleon-Apothosen;"<sup>15</sup> this phrase more aptly described the adulation accorded him by the fictitious characters in the plays. If Kaiser himself revered Napoleon, it was to a great extent in spite of himself, for Pferdewechsel already shows the questionable nature of such worship, and Napoleon in New Orleans shows the disastrously perverted and obsessive forms it can take.

Kaiser calls Napoleon in New Orleans a tragicomedy; the comedy is laid over the tragedy and adds to the poignancy of the protagonist's fundamentally tragic mania. In a letter written in December, 1941 to Julius Marx, Kaiser says:

Zur Erläuterung: in dem Baron Dergen (Titelfigur dieses Schauspiels!) schuf ich den Don Quichote des totalen Krieges. Ein Mann, der völlig blind ist oder geblendet von seinem Wahn, aus dem es dann ein furchtbares Erwachen gibt.<sup>16</sup>

Walther Huder aptly sees the play as a "Moritatenspiel"<sup>17</sup> and states its warning thus:

Wer sich mit Hab, Gut und Blut, mit kritiklosem Gehorsam und reaktionärem Pathos zum Steigbügelhalter der Kriegs-Bestie macht, fällt Gaunern in die Hände, stürzt selbst in den

---

<sup>14</sup>B.J. Kenworthy, Georg Kaiser (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), pp. 137-138.

<sup>15</sup>Paulsen, Georg Kaiser. Die Perspektiven seines Werkes, p. 109.

<sup>16</sup>See Walther Huder, "Die politischen und sozialen Themen der Exil-Dramatik Georg Kaisers," Sinn und Form, XIII (1961), p. 610.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 612.



Untergang und wird zum Objekt für "das ewige Gelächter" überhaupt.<sup>18</sup>

The play becomes a denunciation of war, of false heroes such as Hitler, and of their self-deluding minions. Dergan has not even the partially redeeming virility of Amphytryon, for all Dergan's military glory is vicarious.

Napoleon in New Orleans is based, in a sense, on the same kind of "Doppelgängertum" which helped to bring about Amphytryon's nemesis. Legend has it that the real Napoleon was kidnapped from St. Helena and replaced by someone else, after which (according to the legend) he spent the rest of his days in America. Kaiser re-works this legend into a bitter condemnation of "Kriegsbegeisterung," exposing the blind worshippers as well as the false objects of their misdirected adoration.

The Baron Dergan, a rich planter living near New Orleans, has established in his mansion an extensive museum of relics and trophies of Napoleon's battles. He worships the exiled Emperor as a demigod, and is so blinded by his preoccupation with past glories that he is easily deceived by a group of gangsters who decide to capitalize on his obsession. At first the members of this gang, Carotte, Quatresous, Youyou, Polly and Pepa, are content to take Dergan's money in exchange for old guns or uniforms which they steal or make themselves. In due course, however, one of their ingenious

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 610.



lies--to the effect that an old coat they sell to Dergan had been smuggled from the island by the captain of a ship bringing provisions--inspires in Dergan the notion that Napoleon himself could similarly be smuggled from the island. Accordingly, the resourceful gangsters arrange for this to happen. Youyou, who is a skilled actor and is not known to Dergan, impersonates Napoleon, and Dergan, overwhelmed by the arrival of this incarnation of his deity, instals the false Napoleon in the shrine which he has made of his mansion, while he and his daughter Gloria move to a lodge in the grounds, whence Dergan makes daily visits to the mansion to pay homage to his "Emperor."

For a while the gangsters can enjoy the fruits of their deceit, but when the real Napoleon dies and the news reaches New Orleans, their game is obviously over, for they no longer have a pretext for making Dergan observe secrecy. They have not only fleeced Dergan of all his wealth, but have left Gloria expecting Youyou's child, for she, imbued with her father's visions of a new Napoleonic era, had entered into a "marriage" with Napoleon-Youyou. Thus degraded and impoverished, father and daughter suffer the final blow when the gangsters reveal the nature of their charade and take their leave with mocking laughter. Left alone, Dergan and Gloria determine to take their lives, for her unborn child would only perpetuate the mockery if they lived on, and in any case the myth which was Dergan's whole



life is now exploded. At the end of the play Dergan invokes a favourite Kaiser image, the Tower of Babel, and declares that this time the building of it will not be hindered by petty differences and misunderstandings, for America is to witness the birth of a new, harmonious mankind, for whom the craftsman's tools will displace the weapons of war.

Kaiser's Dergan, representing the gullibility of the German nation, is obsessed with war, conquest and military glory (Ruhm) for their own sake: "Was ist denn ein Leben, wenn es nicht Sieg und Ruhm ist?" (III, 568) he asks, in a phrase reminiscent of *Amphitryon*. His ideal is "den Ruhm zu suchen und dem Degen sich über allem Tun zu weihen" (III, 569).

Youyou knows how to play the part of Napoleon exactly as the credulous Dergan would wish to see him, as a ruthless totalitarian warmonger interested only in the acquisition of power. Playing this role to the full, he says: "Nur solche Männer dürfen um mich sein, für die der Kaiser die Welt ist--Dann ist die Welt des Kaisers" (III, 589).

This attitude is combined with others to build up a mockingly ironic portrait of a dictator who is unmistakably Hitler, and of the gullible supporters who could make possible his accession to power. Ironically, Dergan characterizes the times as "zu träge für mächtige Bewegungen des Krieges (III, 570), whereas in fact it is this "Trägheit"



which allows dictatorships to come into being and steer a country towards war. Dergan wilfully blinds himself to the possibility of deception, seeing any incipient doubts merely as grounds for strengthening his trust, so that the impostor Youyou can calmly tell him: "Man ist nicht, wer man scheint--und wird für den gehalten, der man nicht ist" (III, 588), which is a fundamental principle of Kaiser's dramas. The importance of Schein is stressed repeatedly--a man is as good as his uniform: ". . . der Mensch muß nach seinem öffentlichen Auftreten beurteilt werden" (III, 593-594).

The corollary of this is that genuine humanity and individuality are lost. Die Lederköpfe was the prime example of this, and we are reminded of the Basileus--and of the Nazis--when Napoleon-Youyou says of his "army:"

Das ist numerierte Masse, die sonst nichts unterscheidet. Einer wie der andre--und keiner mehr ein eigentliches Wesen. Nur Blutgefäße, die platzen und sich leeren. Wer zählt die Tropfen im Meer--im Blutmeer? Ich hätte meine Schlachten nicht gewonnen mit einem Litermaß in meiner Hand, um dann zu sagen: es ist genügend Blut geflossen--hört auf. Kein Grund zu solcher Milde--Es ist ja nicht mein Blut. (III, 623)

It becomes very obvious at times, in the plays of the war years, that they are vehicles for Kaiser's own righteous indignation against the Nazis. But this personal element does not obtrude on the substance of this play because of the ironic distance achieved by the historical setting and the ambivalence of the Napoleon figure. Kaiser's bitter



condemnation of military imperialism is all the more effective for being placed in the mouth of Napoleon-Youyou, who scathingly discounts the notion that any greatness is needed to play the role of dictator:

Das ist eine Rolle, die den jämmerlichsten Komödianten gelingt. Eben weil sie so jämmerlich ist. Sie setzt sich aus den minderwertigsten Bestandteilen zusammen. Roheit, Gemeinheit, Wortbruch, die Niedertracht in jeder Form, Neid, Haß, Verrat, Mord offen und geheim . . . . Es sind die Neigungen, die der menschlichen Natur beigemischt sind und durch Entwicklung mehr und mehr unterdrückt werden, bis sie gänzlich entschlummern. Der Imperator weckt sie wieder. Er setzt seinen Willen durch, indem er jedem andern das Maul verbietet . . . . Die Macht braucht Mörder, Schurken, Gauner. Sie ist ein Tausendfuß und jeder Fuß ist ein Verbrechen--eins immer schamloser als das andere ausgeführt--bis man die Macht hat. Bis man Imperator ist. (III, 594)

In this play as well as in Der Soldat Tanaka, money becomes the symbol for the misuse of human resources and the corruption of values. Quatresous, whose name derives from his worth as a soldier, mystifies his friends by wanting money, though he cannot explain why: "Ein Mensch ist ohne Geld kein Mensch. Wo er es hat, ist nebensächlich --nur muß er's haben. Es ist mein natürliches Bedürfnis" (III, 596). Yet Quatresous is aware of the effects of wealth: "Der Verstand ist für die Besitzlosen da--die Begüterten brauchen ihn nicht mehr." (III, 602) Wealth, then, removes the need for humanity; but it also goes hand in hand with power, so that this spiritual void affects not only the possessors of wealth but also those subject to them, especially as power reveals itself to be a cancerous



growth which propagates itself at the expense of the body of society. The same process was depicted in Gas and Die Lederköpfe and the formula is repeated in Tanaka and now here in the words of Napoleon-Youyou:

Es ist doch komisch, wie leicht das Geld fließt, wenn es sich um Beschaffung von Waffen handelt. Da gibt es plötzlich keine Knappheit der öffentlichen Mittel mehr--das Geld scheint buchstäblich vom Himmel zu fallen. Es überschwemmt das Land und sättigt jedes Bedürfnis nach Kanonen und Gewehren. Wenn dir aber einfallen sollte dasselbe Geld . . . für die öffentliche Verteilung von Brot zu fordern, so würde dasselbe Geld sofort von der Bildfläche verschwinden. Was geht nur in den Köpfen der Menschen vor, daß sie mit diesen Vorgängen einverstanden sind? (III, 602)

Dergan refers to his deceivers as "Brandstifter" (III, 633), and indeed his refusal to see how he is being tricked and his naive insistence on the need for "Vertrauen" recall the situation in Max Frisch's Biedermann und die Brandstifter, while his gullibility and delusions of grandeur in general remind us of Molière's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.

Like many of Kaiser's central figures, Dergan cannot survive the dawn of insight, but can only die a remorseful death, abjuring the idol he had worshipped. He dies amid Utopian visions of a more enlightened future breed of men: "Die neue Erde für ein neues Menschentum, das sich vom Blutstrom aller Völker speist: Amerika!" (III, 634) That this ending is a somewhat contrived attempt at optimism seems clear from Kaiser's words of December, 1940: "Ich habe Sehnsucht nach U.S.A., nicht weil es U.S.A. ist, sondern weil es nicht Europa ist."<sup>19</sup> This negative

---

<sup>19</sup>Walter Huder, p. 597.



conclusion reflects Kaiser's own pessimism, disillusion and restlessness in the war years and is a stern and bitter reprimand to the German nation for allowing its affairs to be run by a gangster masquerading as a political leader.

All the plays treated so far in this chapter are denunciations of militarism as embodied in the person of the warrior. This theme is reduced to its barest, most brutish essentials in Die Lederköpfe, where there is no question of any motivation other than conquest and bloodlust. It is a feature of all Kaiser's militaristic figures that they enjoy cruelty and destruction and the tumult of battle for their own sake and not as the means to an end--except the accession to absolute power. There is no suggestion of a definite political ideology inspiring the acts of aggression; only in the case of Duguesclins is there a hint of national interest as a determining factor, and his conception of national honour is so bizarre and suicidal that it cannot for a moment be taken seriously and must be dismissed entirely when he offers his services to the victorious English King. *Amphitryon*, too, operates from selfish motives--the plunder he brings back to Thebes is just an excuse to justify more of his wantonly destructive campaigns.

The reason for this lack of any more complex motivation is that such information would be extraneous as far as Kaiser is concerned, and would only blur the clarity of



his dialectic; for he is interested solely in "der Krieg im Krieger," and his warriors are merely figures representing militarism per se.

For this reason the plays Europa and Der gerettete Alkibiades have no place in this discussion, for they are stylistic and intellectual exercises devoid of the fervent engagement which typifies all the plays in which Kaiser is directly concerned with the phenomenon of militarism itself. Kaiser himself stresses the rationalistic quality of Der gerettete Alkibiades in an essay devoted to the play and to the intellectual attraction of the Platonic dialogue as a dramatic form. In that essay he states:

Das Ja überspringt sein Nein zu vollrem Ja--die Steigerung ist von maßlosem Schwung--und auf den Schlüssen bläht sich geformter Geist wie die Hände Gottes über seiner Weltschöpfung. (IV, 544)

Nothing could more clearly indicate pure intellectual indulgence, but if any doubt remained, it would surely be dispelled by the concluding words of the essay: "Da befriedigt Schauspiel tiefere Begierde: ins Denk-Spiel sind wir eingezogen und bereits erzogen aus karger Schau-Lust zu glückvoller Denk-Lust" (IV, 545). It was this sentence--and the attitude it reflects--which led Bernhard Diebold to attach to Kaiser the epithet "Denkspieler." The term is certainly applicable--by his own admission--to the author of Der gerettete Alkibiades; but although most of the plays discussed in this study likewise bear the distinctive



stamp of Kaiser's dialectical structure, they are designed not to excite "Denk-Lust" but rather to awaken our compassion and respect for humanity--and our contempt for inhumanity--on a universal plane where our response can combine the full potency of both reason and emotion. Kaiser's warriors epitomize the "Nein" of militarism, to which he opposes the "Ja" of human fulfillment and prosperity, and this confrontation was to him the ultimate dialectical challenge.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MILITARISM: DER SOLDAT TANAKA, NSDAP, DIE SPIELDOSE, DAS FLOß DER MEDUSA.

The discussion in the previous chapter centred on the warrior figure as the exponent of militarism and hence as the embodiment of its characteristics. The plays to be discussed in this chapter view militarism from the point of view of its victims, who may be far removed from the actual source of power but nevertheless suffer from its influence.

Needless to say, a régime which uses military means to pursue aggressively nationalistic policies must necessarily devote most of its attention and most of its resources to the maintenance of its military strength. Even when such a régime is not concerned with territorial gains at the expense of neighboring countries, it is still committed to maintaining its image of military preparedness. In order to be effective, such a policy demands that a huge and incessant supply of materials and manpower be at the disposal of the régime for military applications. The welfare and the liberty of the populace are readily sacrificed to this all-consuming requirement. The militaristic régime thus feeds like a parasite on the life-blood of the nation.

For Kaiser this aspect of militarism--its effect on the people within the nation's frontiers--was just as repugnant as the more obvious destruction caused by outwardly



directed aggression. He refers to it repeatedly in his anti-war plays, including some of those already discussed. For example, the City Commander in Die Lederköpfe describes the debilitating effect of constantly waging war, and likens war to a voracious crocodile which swallows everything (III, 13); and Napoleon-Youyou in Napoleon in New Orleans scornfully comments that limitless funds are available for procuring arms but nothing at all when it is a question of feeding the people (III, 602); and as a final example, Amphytrion considers it the right of the war machine to force every man to abandon his chosen calling and take up arms as a faceless soldier, one of a mass of indistinguishable figures (VI, 456). In these plays, however, Kaiser did not dwell on these social considerations, since he was more concerned with the source of the problem, as embodied in the warrior, and with the destructive effect which results directly from the warrior's campaigns. In the plays which will now be discussed, Kaiser considers the devastating effect of military institutions and war on society at large and concludes that the distinction between victors and vanquished is of interest only to the military leaders; it is of little concern to the common man, whose cherished pattern of life is in any case disrupted or destroyed. Kaiser therefore emphasizes in these plays of the Second World War period the fact that militarism is the common enemy of all humanity.



Kaiser's modus operandi in these anti-war plays is to portray in juxtaposition the hardships of the common people and the callous indifference and corruption of the military leaders and their functionaries. This technique achieves its most poignant expression in Der Soldat Tanaka, where the conflicting elements converge in a single character, with tragic results. In Das Floß der Medusa and Die Spieldose, war is experienced as a pervasive and malevolent influence, a disease which penetrates deeply into the hearts and minds of ordinary people, sparing nobody, not even the traditional "innocents," the child and the peasant. In the plays Klawitter and Der englische Sender, which together form the diptych NSDAP, Kaiser narrows his focus and directs his criticism specifically against Hitler's régime in Germany. All of these plays bear eloquent testimony to Kaiser's own disillusionment and despair from the time when Nazi pressure forced him to leave Germany, until his death in 1945.

It was not mere chance which led Kaiser to select Japan as the setting for a drama condemning military dictatorships; the fact that the Japanese embassy saw fit to protest the performance of Der Soldat Tanaka in Zürich during the war, suggests that the play found its mark. Japan at that time was the paradigm of military dictatorship, exemplifying in Asia what the Nazis hoped to achieve in Germany. Extremes of militarism could be fostered in Japan as a form of religious devotion, for the Emperor was revered as



a demigod by the populace. Such a situation favours the emergence of despotic rule in the first place, and facilitates subsequent manipulation of the people by the central powers. In Der Soldat Tanaka, Kaiser's bitter protest against militarism is strengthened by his poignant evocation of the suffering of the peasantry, for both arise organically from Tanaka's ambivalent situation as humble peasant and proud soldier combined.

In a letter to Cäsar von Arx, Kaiser writes about the significance this play holds for him:

Der Soldat Tanaka erhebt eine Fackel der Anklage--wogegen? Gegen alles, was heute geschieht, was gegenwärtig bewundert und verzärtelt wird. Gegen die uniformierte Feigheit--gegen den Absturz in die Soldaterei. Dies ist der letzte Grad menschlicher Entwürdigung . . . . der Soldat Tanaka spricht mit einer Deutlichkeit, die die Einfalt der Größe hat . . . . Jetzt heißt es die Fackel anzünden, die der Soldat Tanaka über die Welt hinschwingt. Vielleicht brennt sie den Krieg aus wie eine eitrige Wunde. Vielleicht? Bestimmt. Aber wir müssen uns aufraffen--wir müssen uns eilen. Wir müssen Mittel und Stille finden, wo wir uns zusammenfinden--wir Verschwörer der höheren Ansprüche und Verächter der billigen Lebensformen. Wem das Leben nicht teuer ist--nun: der mag Soldat sein. Der einfache Soldat Tanaka ist anspruchsvoller. Anspruchsvoller als sein Kaiser, der sich Sohn des Himmels nennt.<sup>1</sup>

Der Soldat Tanaka was thus seen by Kaiser as an exposure of the inhumanity and ruthlessness of all military dictatorships and as a rallying point for all pacifists.

The first act reveals the heartlessness of the ruling powers, who are more concerned with the maintenance of

---

<sup>1</sup>See Rudolph Adolf, "Das Exilschaffen Georg Kaisers," Die Quelle, II, No. 5 (n.d.), 55-62.



military strength than with the welfare of the peasantry. The rice crop has failed, and the peasants, poor at the best of times, are on the verge of starvation. The merchants reflect the attitude of the establishment, for their response to the shortage of food is dictated solely by self-interest: they simply raise the prices.

When Tanaka comes home for a brief visit, accompanied by his friend and fellow recruit Wada, they bring with them food which they have saved from their own plain but adequate rations and schnaps which they have bought with their savings; for Tanaka has seen a newspaper article which referred to the plight of the starving peasants:

Das Los des Reisbauern--hie ein Artikel. Den konnte ich nicht zu Ende lesen. Ich mute doch meinen Dienst verrichten. Den kann man nicht verrichten, wenn man zuviel wei. Ich wei nicht, warum ich das sage. Ich sagte mir aber, da es gengt zu wissen: die Hungersnot ist angebrochen--es darben meine Leute. (III, 723)

This speech highlights one of the principles on which all dictatorships depend: the control of information and the propagation of the belief that knowledge is dangerous. Evidently Tanaka has been thoroughly indoctrinated, for he has not read to the end of the newspaper article, even though he was free to do so. He had no cogent reason to stop reading, except that the concept of duty which has been impressed upon him forbids him to seek the truth. The whole play pivots on the shock which later releases Tanaka from his habitual censorship of his curiosity and his critical faculties.



Kaiser meticulously prepares us for Tanaka's moment of awakening by confronting him with questions which cry out for answers. He is bewildered when his parents present him and Wada with good food, wine and cigarettes, and he is far from convinced by the half-truths with which they explain the availability of such luxuries. His forebodings are deepened by the absence of his sister Yoshiko, whom Wada wants to marry. He is told she has entered the service of a rich farmer, and that the luxuries he is enjoying had been paid for with money his father had received in this transaction involving Yoshiko. Tanaka's suspicions are aroused but must remain unresolved, for Kaiser now introduces--as a "retardierendes Moment" which also contributes to the exposition--a group of bedraggled villagers who have come to wonder at the uniforms of the two soldiers.

The fascination which the uniforms hold for the villagers stems partly from the magnificence of the uniforms compared with their own ragged clothing, and partly from the almost religious awe the uniforms excite by virtue of their association with the Emperor. Much of this scene is devoted to emphasizing this relationship and at the same time suggesting an important difference between Tanaka and Wada. When Tanaka declares that the villagers are all close acquaintances of his, he is disconcerted to note that they go on staring at him as if he were a stranger. In effect he is, for to them the uniform makes him a completely different



person. So although Tanaka looks upon himself as one of them, they cannot see beyond his uniform. "Du bist mit keinem von uns zu vergleichen," (III, 727) a man explains to him. Again, when Tanaka feels the same man clutching at his arm and asks the reason, the man says he is feeling the uniform, not Tanaka. To Wada, all of this is no surprise, for he sees himself and Tanaka first and foremost as soldiers, and this does indeed set them apart from the rabble.

As yet, this dichotomy within Tanaka between the person and the function, exists only at the fringes of his consciousness, and is not yet a source of conflict. He is even able to enter into the spirit of the occasion and heightens the wonderment of the villagers by comparing these uniforms, which they wear every day, with the dress uniforms which they wear on parade. He and Wada tell them that if a soldier were to appear for parade wearing the boots from his everyday uniform, he would be excluded from the parade and the march-past, a fate so terrible that Wada speaks of it in hushed tones (III, 728). Their comments emphasize the reverence inspired by the Emperor, and the rigidity of the system of which they are part. Every detail must be exactly as prescribed, and nobody may do anything except what his function dictates: thus a member of the regimental band practises only for that role and must be able to play in pouring rain or when blinded by sunshine (III, 728-729).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>This motif, repeated threefold at this point, clearly has the same significance here as in Die Bürger von Calais or Zweimal Amphitryon: blind obedience to the militarist cause.



When the villagers ask what purpose the march-past serves, Tanaka replies without hesitation:

Da gibt es so wenig zu erklären--: der Kaiser will sehen, wofür er so viel Geld ausgibt. Wißt ihr denn, was das dem Kaiser kostet? Die Instrumente? Die Stiefel, besser noch als diese? Unsre Mützen? Die Hosen--Röcke--Strümpfe, die wir täglich tragen? Lest ihr nie Zeitungen? Da könnt ihr lesen, was solch ein Heer mit seinem ganzen Aufwand kostet. Der Kaiser weiß es und er läßt sich nichts vormachen. Er prüft uns haargenau, ob wir auch alles richtig verwalten, was er uns gibt--und wenn wir vorbeimarschieren, dann sieht sein scharfes Falkenauge jeden Knopf und jede Schnalle. Es ist sein Eigentum--es bleibt sein Eigentum. Woher sonst stammt es? Wir haben nichts gekauft. (III, 729)<sup>3</sup>

Tanaka then sums up his naive account of the Emperor's supposed generosity: "Für nichts bezahlst du und alles hast du. Das kann nur der Kaiser!" (III, 730) So completely is Tanaka the dupe of the system, at this stage, that he ignores the evidence of his own eyes. Although he feels himself to be a member both of the army and of his own village, he does not yet see the economic connection between the richness of the one and the poverty of the other. In fact he makes propaganda for the Emperor at the end of the act by distributing among the poor villagers the food he sees as proof of the Emperor's generosity.

Tanaka's blindness to the Emperor's true nature is symbolized by the brilliant white light which envelops the Emperor and conceals his person from view. All that can be

---

<sup>3</sup>The "Falkenauge" metaphor is used here not only to suggest keen vision but also because of the falcon's--and the Emperor's--raptorial proclivity.



seen of him is the stallion on which he is mounted and the plume on his helmet, both symbols of military dominance (III, 728). The combined effect of this imagery is therefore to suggest a higher-ranking equivalent of the uniform as a symbol, since the result in both cases is to conceal the individual's true nature and identity and substitute as the received reality his function and his rank.

Kaiser's abhorrence of the uniform, as the epitome of brutality and dehumanization as well as uniformity, was enhanced by the fetishistic significance accorded to it by the military leaders. Every virtue they ascribed to the uniform was for Kaiser another reason to despise it, and he vented his feelings on the subject in aphoristic comments, as for example: "Die Moral hat nur wenige Anhänger--aber der Amoral strömen sie in uniformierten Haufen zu" (IV, 631).

The distinction between "amoral" and "immoral" is essential for an understanding of Act II, the crucial peripeteia of the play. The Officer Umezu, whom Tanaka kills, is immoral, as are the Emperor whom Umezu serves and the military dictatorship both of them represent. Tanaka himself, as we first see him, is amoral, in the strict sense that he is devoid of any effective moral standards, partly because he is too immature to have formulated any, but chiefly because he has adopted in their stead the behavioural code of the military, which he believes to cover all contingencies. One must remember that Tanaka, although he



is an eager recruit, is doing his compulsory national service, whereas Umezu, one may assume, is a dedicated career soldier.

The second act takes place in a brothel to which Tanaka has accompanied the other members of his troop after their victory in a shooting match. The others attribute the victory to Tanaka's marksmanship and ask him how he remains so steady. His reply betrays his total faith in his military superiors: "Es war ganz einfach. Ich hörte, was der Hauptmann sagte--und sagte mir: der Hauptmann hätte seine Worte nicht gesprochen, wenn es unmöglich war. Ein Hauptmann spricht nur das, was einen klaren Sinn hat" (III, 735). Wada reminds Tanaka that he can expect promotion if he takes out a commission. The purpose of this scene is to emphasize that Tanaka is an exemplary soldier; he does what he is told, and does it well and enthusiastically.

Thus far, Tanaka believes every aspect of army life and of the system he serves to be beyond reproach. We see signs of awakening judgement only when he is involved with matters outside the ban of the military code. For example, he recognizes what rigorous training has done to the prostitutes, who are, as the madam says, "gehorsam wie die Äffchen" (III, 739), but he does not apply the same criticism to soldiers; and he chides Wada for assuming that the girls are really as alike as their make-up causes them to appear, yet he himself forgets that soldiers' uniforms have the same



effect, as the reaction of the villagers had proved. He applies a double standrad, or at least a relative standard, from which the army, as the expression of an absolute standard, is exempt. However, as the madam says to Tanaka, little realizing how far-reaching the import of her words will be: "Sie bilden sich Ihr Urteil selbst" (III, 742).

Tanaka's bitter indictment of the régime he has served with such blind devotion is not the result of reflection. Although it is not verbalized till later, at his trial, its formulation occurs simultaneously with the sudden shock of insight as he recognizes his sister Yoshiko here in the brothel. This instant constitutes "der Keim zu Taten . . . , die unabweisbar sind" (III, 743). From this moment on he may be seen--and sees himself--as the instrument of a higher order.

Tanaka tries desperately to find an explanation which will exonerate all concerned, but the awful truth, that their parents have sold Yoshiko into prostitution, forces itself upon him. This is the truth to which, as a dutiful soldier, he had blinded himself by reading only the headline in the newspaper. Now she relates to him the simple economic facts which have brought her there. She herself places no blame and harbours no resentment, for lifelong familiarity with hardship has taught her to be fatalistic, and in any case the chain of responsibility is so long that she cannot see where it ultimately leads to. She tells



Tanaka how the failure of the rice harvest had deprived their parents of both food and income, so that they could not pay the interest owing on a loan. The man who had lent them the money explains that he must have their payment so that he can pay his own taxes, which are needed chiefly to pay for the upkeep of the Emperor's huge army. Yoshiko's simple account brings home to Tanaka the fact that the villagers were right: he cannot be a soldier, yet remain a simple peasant, because the two classes are mutually exclusive. Whichever one thrives, does so at the expense of the other. Thus Tanaka has unwittingly become the focal point of a conflict "zwischen widernatürlichem Staatsgesetz und machtlosem Naturgesetz,"<sup>4</sup> to use Walther Huder's expression. Tanaka's life up to this juncture has combined naivety, ill-founded faith and misguided ambition; from this point on he becomes the single-minded advocate of humanity, guided and strengthened by his new-found insight.

The logic of this new position is pursued inexorably. When an officer enters the brothel and demands the services of Yoshiko, Tanaka stabs first her and then the officer, for this is the only way in which he can redeem her essential humanity, now threatened by Umezu, who represents the inhuman system which has now become Tanaka's sworn enemy.

---

<sup>4</sup>Walther Huder, "Die politischen und sozialen Themen der Exildramatik Georg Kaisers." Sinn und Form, XIII (1961), 606.



Tanaka's trial, which forms the third act, pits the representative of humanity, in the person of Tanaka, against the forces of inhumanity, symbolized by the portrait of the Emperor which dominates the court-room. Once he breaks his initial silence, Tanaka declares in the course of his testimony that he did not know Umezu, but did know the officer Umezu. Similarly, his action in killing the officer was directed not specifically at Umezu but "an jeden--der wie Umezu war" (III, 760). This single instance is thus generalized to apply to all representatives of military dictatorships. It is natural, therefore, that Tanaka's final challenge should be directed at the Emperor himself. The accused now becomes the accuser, just as the vanquished became the victors in Die Bürger von Calais. In narrating to the court the events which led up to the double murder, Tanaka has, in effect, pronounced his own indictment of the Emperor and all he stands for. Now he demands that the Emperor humble himself and beg forgiveness. He imagines the form the Emperor's confession would take and the words he would use:

Tanaka, . . . weißt du jetzt, woher das Geld stammt, mit dem ich diese Regimente bezahle? Und noch die Regimente hinter diesen, die überall im Land stehn? Jetzt weißt du es. Ich nehm' es nicht aus meiner Tasche--ich nehme es von euch, die in so großen Nöten darben, daß eure Schwestern sich verkaufen müssen, um Zins zu bringen. Es ist unentschuldig. . . . Es hat noch niemand sich vor dir bei mir beklagt--du bist der erste, der mehr ist als alle andern--ein Mensch. Ein Kaiser ich nur. (III, 767)



For adding lèse-majesté to his other crimes, the individual Tanaka is summarily executed; but Tanaka the representative of humanitarian principles has triumphed over the militarism embodied in the Emperor, so that the spirit of humanity which had seemed moribund at the beginning of the play, is presented as immortal at the end.

In view of Kaiser's personal experience of Nazi persecution, it was natural that a part of his denunciation of military dictatorships should be directed specifically at the Nazi régime, if only to provide a release of the bitter hatred he naturally felt for its members. This purpose was fulfilled by the companion pieces Klawitter and Der englische Sender, which together form the diptych NSDAP. Even at first glance, the style of both plays is in sharp contrast to that of Der Soldat Tanaka. Whereas the criticism of the régime in the latter play was inherent in the plot and the characters, here it is delivered in the form of outrageous parody or bitter harangue. It is never in any doubt who the targets are, perhaps because the attacks are superficial and personal and offer little indication of the root causes of the Nazis' rise to power. As Adolf Schütz says:

Kaiser ist kein Politiker; er stand den Zeitströmungen fremd gegenüber, und wenn es ihm in den Lederköpfen gelungen war, in historisch-zeitlosem Gewande die Diktatur and den totalen Krieg zu brandmarken, kam er in den beiden, zu NSDAP zusammengefaßten Stücken, Klawitter und Der



englische Sender, nicht über eine grotesk übersteigernde Schwarzweißmalerei hinaus.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the dramatist Ernst Hoff in Klawitter and the Büdingers in Der englische Sender are characters of unimpeachable virtue who represent the pure incorruptible heart of Germany, and provide a foil to the ludicrous posturings and bestial lusts of the Nazi party members. The theme of both plays is the manipulation of the populace by the Nazi dictators to serve their own purposes.

In Klawitter, the more ambitious of the two plays, Kaiser portrays the activities of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, specifically the branch of the organization which propagated art considered to agree with Nazi ideals, and rigorously suppressed all other artistic expression. The methods employed by the Nazis to gain control of literature within Germany, and the cultural climate to which their control gave rise, are described in the following words of Walter Berendsohn:

Die Aufpeitschung der halb- und ungebildeten Massen gegen den freien Geist, die systematische Ausrottung des freien Worts durch die Regierung war nichts als ein Teil des umfassenden Plans zur "Ertüchtigung" des deutschen Volkes, zu seiner "Stählung," die "Stahlromantik" in der Literatur des Dritten Reichs nichts als die romantisch hüllende Begleitmusik des Marsches zur Gewaltherrschaft über Europa.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Adolf Schütz, "Georg Kaisers Nachlaß" (diss., Bern, 1951), p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Berendsohn, Die humanistische Front (Zürich: Europa, 1946), p. 12.



In the matter of literary censorship, Kaiser knew whereof he spoke, for he himself had been deprived of his livelihood and black-listed, after the Nazis had arbitrarily forbidden further performances of one of his plays, Der Silbersee. Klawitter chronicles the results of an attempt by a banned writer named Ernst Hoff to outwit the Nazis and ensure dissemination of his work by employing a proxy, supposedly a gifted but hitherto unknown writer. Being an uncultured and unprincipled boor, this proxy rapidly enters the good graces of the Nazi culture bureau and extracts all the profit he can from his privileged position. This unlikely plot gives Kaiser the opportunity to pillory not only the Nazis but also those who collaborated with them; the latter are seen as opportunists who by this means gain access to wealth and power which they could never achieve by virtue of merit.

At the opening of the play, the Hoffs' landlord introduces the theme of artistic conformism under duress when he suggests that Hoff should adapt his works to accord with Nazi preferences, in the same way as he himself offers new tenants their choice of carpet colour (VI, 312). However, since Hoff will not compromise his genius in this way, he will have to suffer the consequences of being a black-listed writer. Since he no longer earns any income from his work, he cannot pay the rent he owes, so the landlord evicts the Hoffs forthwith. He typifies the mercilessly materialistic society which the Nazis have created.



When Hoff returns home, he delivers himself of an impassioned speech reaffirming his faith in his literary mission. The speech is filled with symbolic reminiscences of Kaiser's other anti-militaristic plays:

Es ist . . . schön zum Schutz von etwas aufgerufen werden, das einzig und erhaben ist--: die deutsche Kunst . . . . Sie wollen sie zerstören. Es ist ein Trieb, der manchmal ausbricht, wenn sich die Unterlegenen sammeln und sie ihr eigenes Gesicht auslöschen. Schamvoll und wütend, weil es sich nie zu voller Menschenantlitzklarheit entwickelte. Dann sind sie in der Überzahl. Dann dämmert eine Tierzeit wieder. Tierzeit ist jetzt. Rudel brauner Wölfe vollführen wüsten Überfall--bellen und beißen. Da ist heiserer Lärm und Dunst von Blut. Der Tierzeit Zeichen. Und sie dauert, bis wieder eine Menschenzeit anbricht. (VI, 319)

In order that his work may still reach the public and thus keep alive the values in which he believes, Hoff selects at random a proxy who will present himself to the authorities as the author of Hoff's latest play. The supposed dramatist is interviewed in the office of "Staatstheaterintendant" Koepfer.

The conversations among the officials before Klawitter's arrival reflect the contemporary background of total and systematic control of literature by the Nazis. All forms of liberalism, intellectualism and free creativity were stifled, and failure to support the Nazi cause was a punishable offence. The quality of art was to be levelled downwards to the point where even the least educated--the masses to whom the Nazis especially wished to appeal--could be affected by it. The subject-matter and treatment were strictly stereotyped, and stressed imperialistic nationalism



and the gospel of the racial purity of the German people.<sup>7</sup> Racial hatred was to be fostered as a virtue, and there was to be implicit belief in the permanence and the divine right of the régime.<sup>8</sup> The cheap emotion and mass effect which this kind of literary endeavour could generate were harnessed to the Nazi machine. The horror of war was never allowed to be seen in its true starkness, but only through the rose-coloured spectacles of nationalistic emotion.<sup>9</sup>

When Klawitter enters Koepfer's office, he is first acquainted by the officials with the cultural ideals which he is now helping to further. He is told that art, like everything else, must follow a pattern prescribed by the party; a party representative must therefore decide whether Klawitter is acceptable:

Obwohl wir im Theater sind, begegnen Sie zuerst nicht dem Direktor--sondern dem Regierungsrat. In diesem Vorgang liegt ein Programm--das unerbittlich vorschreibt, wohin der Kurs geht. Auch in der Kunst. Um Abweichungen zu verhindern, wird jeder streng geprüft, bevor er zugelassen wird. Ein solcher Prüfer bin ich. Vom Staate eingesetzt. Dem Staat verantwortlich. (VI, 341-342)

---

<sup>7</sup>Hence Nuckel's question as to whether there are any Jews among Klawitter's ancestors (VI, 342-342).

<sup>8</sup>The Hoffs' landlord exemplifies this aspect of the Nazi gospel (VI, 312).

<sup>9</sup>This aspect of Nazi propaganda is best illustrated by the response of Ortsleiter Schmutz to the death of Rudolf Büdinger in Der englische Sender. Kaiser has Schmutz conclude his speech with an example of the pseudo-Wagnerian hocus-pocus in which the Nazis liked to cloak their nationalism (VI, 381).



Klawitter is to be assessed according to the number of points he scores. He endears himself to Regierungsrat Nuckel from the start, especially when it emerges that he has been in jail for street-brawling--proof that he is a man of mettle and thus worthy of the party:

Schlag' zu und sei der Stärkere. Schwäche ist unmoralisch. Sie haben unbewußt an jenem Sonntag zur tieferen Moral zurückgefunden . . . . Wie die Natur--jenseits von gut und böse--handeln wir. Wir wollen stark sein--sonst nichts. Geliebt--gehaßt? Wer uns liebt--schwächt uns. Wer uns haßt, macht uns nur stärker. Wir suchen allen Haß der Welt, um das zu werden, was wir sind: Deutsche! (VI, 346)

This speech reflects Kaiser's bitterness concerning the image of Germany which the Nazis had created in the eyes of the world. He himself declared: "Die Deutschen sind kein Volk--die Deutschen sind eine Epidemie" (IV, 635).

Klawitter is filled with confidence now that he has ingratiated himself with the authorities. He has no wish to endanger himself by claiming authorship of any more of Hoff's works. When Hoff protests that "Erfolg verpflichtet" (VI, 361), Klawitter replies with his own formulation, a philosophy better suited to the times: "Besitz verpflichtet--nämlich: ihn zu erhalten. Ich habe meine Chance wahrgenommen--so oder so, der Erfolg gibt recht--und denke das Errungene nicht wieder zu gefährden" (VI, 361). Klawitter's callous opportunism and ruthless retention of power and wealth are clearly intended as a parallel to the Nazi assumption of power,<sup>10</sup> while Hoff, bemusedly realising--far too late--how

---

<sup>10</sup>This interpretation is also supported by the reference to Poland at the beginning of the play (VI, 311).



he has been deceived and exploited, represents the gullible and abused German people when he says: "Ich habe einem Mörder vertraut!" (VI, 362) Similarly, when Klawitter takes Elli by force, we are doubtless intended to see symbolized in this act the Nazis' "rape" of Germany: both Klawitter and the Nazis, alike in their bestiality and total amorality, are simply doing, "was alle tun, wenn sie begierig sind!" (VI, 363)

At the beginning of the final act of Klawitter, Hoff is waiting for his wife in a pastry-shop. The pastry-cook, like everybody else in Nazi Germany, is a victim of "Spezialistentum," and he refuses to discuss anything outside the scope of his profession. When Elli arrives, resplendent in the clothes she has been given by Klawitter, the shop-keeper cannot believe it is the dishevelled Hoff whom she has come to see.

Hoff is oblivious of Elli's new-found materialism. He reiterates his, i.e., Kaiser's artistic mission: to be the last bastion of German art in its time of need, to survive isolation and banishment into the wilderness until the world is ready for its resurrection from the chaos of war. He still believes in Elli's purity, and he declares that he will write for her alone, since nobody else seems worthy of his art:

Die andern--die sich Deutsche nennen. Die sind die Mißgestalteten--und was Gestalt ist, ist tief zuwider. Wenn die Krüppel herrschen, heult nur der Haß verwüstende Befehle. Die Kunst? Diana auf dem Hurenbett . . . . Das



ist die Kunst, mit der sie Notzucht treiben . . . . Und das verschwindet, wenn ihre Zeit um. Wenn aus dem Chaos die Welt sich neu gestalten--die Finsternis verwehn will. Wenn Deutschland wieder der Deutschen Heimat ist. (VI, 367)

However, even the small consolation that Elli represents is illusory. For she, like so many others, prefers capitulation to hardship; she tries to explain herself to Hoff:

Du feierdest Triumphe--und ich war sehr stolz an deiner Seite. Mir galten alle Huldigungen wie dir. Ich wurde so verwöhnt. - - - Und dann kam dieser Umbruch. Du wolltest dich nicht fügen und hattest einen andern Glauben. Gewiß den größeren. Du hieltest fest daran. Du konntest es. Du bist ja auch ein Mann. - - - - Ich bin nur eine Frau. (VI, 368)

With this, she leaves him, his last hope thus destroyed. She is the antithesis of those female figures who become Kaiser's vessels for the rebirth of mankind, for example, the Daughter in Gas, the Daughter also in Die Lederköpfe, and Alkmene in Zweimal Amphytrion. Hoff himself undergoes the same martyrdom as Tanaka. Just as Tanaka had been offered a pardon which would have saved his life but cost him his humanity, so Hoff could have adapted his art to suit Nazi requirements and made of it "Diana auf dem Hurenbett" (VI, 367). This epitomizes Kaiser's view of those artists who chose to collaborate; he himself preferred martyrdom.

Critical opinion of Klawitter has been scathing. Wolfgang Paulsen refers to Hoff's machinations and their



outcome as "grotesk-tragisch,"<sup>11</sup> and certainly the comedy is present only as episodic leavening, creating a most uneven effect. Elsewhere Paulsen says of Hoff:

Er betrügt die Betrüger und läßt sich damit auf ihr Niveau herab. Es ist schwer zu verstehen, daß Kaiser die geistige Integrität seines Doppelgängers derart aufs Spiel setzen konnte, denn es gibt für Hoff keine Rettung aus dem moralischen Dilemma, in das er sich mit seinen abstrusen Skrupellosigkeiten selbst hineinmanövriert hat. Klawitter kann deswegen als Protest gegen Barbarei und Ungeist nicht ernst genommen werden, obgleich man natürlich hinter den zweifelhaften Vorgängen auf der Bühne die eigentlichen Nöte des Dichters spürt. Die politisch-menschliche Motivreihe hat die wahre Problematik Hoff's verdeckt und erstickt.<sup>12</sup>

However, Paulsen seems not to be aware of the reason for the artificiality of the plot. The figure of Hoff is not only representative of German art but is also intended as an allegorical parallel for the German nation. Hoff's fate at the hands of Klawitter is to be equated with Germany's fate at the hands of the Nazis. In order for this parallel to be meaningful, Kaiser has to place Hoff in a position of total dependence on Klawitter. The conclusion we are to draw is the same as in Tanaka: a militaristic régime thrives only at the expense of the nation it professes to serve.

The ostensible aim of Der englische Sender is to demonstrate the abuse of power by the Nazis, especially by such petty officials as Ortsleiter Adolf Schmutz. Schmutz

---

<sup>11</sup>"Georg Kaiser im expressionistischen Raum: zum Problem einer Neudeutung seines Werkes," MDU, L (1958), 292.

<sup>12</sup>Georg Kaiser: die Perspektiven seines Werkes (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960), p. 84.



is cast in the same mould as the City Commander in Die Lederköpfe; both are cowardly and vicious and use the power which their respective positions afford them to victimize others. In this way the City Commander indulges his sadism, and Schmutz forces his attentions on a young girl whose fiancé is believed lost at sea.

The message of Der englische Sender, and also the tone which prevails throughout the play, may be summarized by quoting Kaiser's opinion of the Nazi leader: "In der großen Kloake Geschichte ist dieser Führer (A.H.) ein flüchtiger Furz" (IV, 632). A stage performance of the play<sup>13</sup> led one reviewer to coment:

So scharf und schroff sind seine Effekte gesetzt, daß der Schrecken, den es auslösen soll, zuweilen in Komik umschlägt . . . . Die eingleisige und demonstrative Szenenfolge hat in ihrer kompakten Rhetorik eher der Zorn der Stunde diktiert als Kunstverstand.<sup>14</sup>

Another reviewer laments: "Kaisers gute Absichten bleiben im rein Propagandistischen und Agitatorischen stecken."<sup>15</sup>

That this is fair comment is clear from Kaiser's own notes written before the play's completion. His outline of the plot is interspersed with deprecatory statements about

---

<sup>13</sup>At the Freie Universität, Berlin, January 30, 1963.

<sup>14</sup>Anonymous reviewer in the Telegraf, Berlin, February 5, 1963. Clipping in the Georg-Kaiser-Archiv, University of Alberta.

<sup>15</sup>Anonymous reviewer in the Tagesspiegel, Berlin, February 2, 1963. Georg-Kaiser-Archiv, University of Alberta.



the Nazis, for example: "Nun jagen aber die Nazis keinen davon, der ein Schwein ist, denn sie wollen es nur mit Schweinen zu tun haben . . . . Die Zuchthäusler sind heute die Machthaber."<sup>16</sup>

The play is made a vehicle for ideas such as these, and the characterization of Ortsleiter Adolf Hermann Joseph Schmutz (the targets of Kaiser's scorn are obvious enough) is even more grotesquely exaggerated than that of his cohorts in Klawitter. For example, Schmutz justifies his lascivious designs on Alma Rosien by saying:

Es sind Führerworte, die ich verwende: ich will, daß jeder Soldat bei seinem Urlaub für Ersatz sorgt, falls ihn das Schlachtfeld fordert. Er soll die Lücke selbst schließen, die er reißt. Erst dann hat er soldatisch seine Pflicht erfüllt! (VI, 391)

When Schmutz learns that the Büdingers have been listening to broadcasts from England despite the Nazi edict forbidding this, he warns the whole village in grotesquely exaggerated terms, of the power the Nazis wield and the stress they place on the use of it:

Und müßten wir Verbrechen konstruieren--wir wollen strafen, weil wir strafen können. Sonst setzt das Beil Rost an. Wo keine Köpfe rollen, ist der Staat nicht Staat. Und unsere Machtergreifung wäre nur ein Dienstantritt, wie das in andern Ländern üblich, wo man wählt. Bei uns gibt's keine Wahl--da hat das Volk den Führer und einfürallemal genug! (VI, 413)

---

<sup>16</sup>From Kaiser's notes in the unfinished play. Georg-Kaiser-Archiv, University of Alberta.



By using blackmail, Schmutz forces Alma to marry him. But at the end of the ceremony a woman appears who proves to be the wife of Schmutz. He had stolen her savings before running away, and now she has caught him in the act of adding bigamy to his thievery and other crimes. She had sought him in those places to which one might expect one of his type to gravitate:

In sämtlichen Gefängnissen und Zuchthäusern habe ich nach ihm gefragt und keines hatte ihn im Kittchen. Wo sollte er nur sein, wenn er nicht Sträfling ist? Da ging mir plötzlich ein Licht auf: er ist in der Partei. Das ist doch jetzt der Unterschlupf für alle, die etwas auf dem Kerbholz haben. Das ist die Elite der Nation--der braune Auswurf. (VI, 425)

At this point Schmutz admits defeat and makes his getaway, pausing only to filch money from a cash-box in the outer office. This ignominious rout of the Nazi Ortsleiter serves as the dénouement of a play whose main purpose has been to heap ridicule and scorn on the Nazis, but which has little to say about the problem of militarism in general and its underlying causes. The propagandist motives of Der englische Sender and Klawitter, however justifiable in themselves, are self-defeating in that they rob the plays of any significance beyond this limited purpose, by substituting ridicule for satire and pathos for poignancy.

Die Spieldose (1942) shares part of its plot with Der englische Sender. In both plays a young girl receives news of the death in action of her fiancé, and in both plays the information turns out to be false. However, the implications



of this reversal of fortunes are much more convoluted in Die Spieldose than was the case in Der englische Sender, where Rudolf's existence served chiefly to emphasize Alma's purity.

At the beginning of Die Spieldose, which is set in a farm-house in Brittany, Pierre Chaudraz and Noelle are reading a letter from Paul Chaudraz, Pierre's son and Noelle's fiancé, who is stationed on the Maginot Line. Parmelin, the local burgomaster, brings news of Paul's death. Instead of mourning Paul's death, Pierre and Noelle determine to erase it from their minds altogether by turning to each other. After their marriage has brought forth a son, they again receive a visit from Parmelin, this time to tell them that Paul is still alive, though he has lost his memory. Pierre and Noelle agree to care for him. The sound of a musical box restores Paul's memory, and he realizes with horror what has happened during his absence. He kills Pierre, making his death appear natural, and soon afterwards marries Noelle. However, his deed allows his conscience no rest; his chance to atone for it comes when Parmelin seeks his help in finding out who has killed a soldier of the occupying forces. Ten hostages are to be shot if the killer is not found. Paul declares himself to be the killer and is thus able to save ten innocent hostages while atoning for his own patricide.

Kaiser is at pains to show in Die Spieldose that the intensely introspective involvements of its trio of central



characters are in fact representative of the far-reaching effects of war. War is seen as the malevolent power of fate "ein Chaos in der Welt" (III, 856), randomly striking down innocent victims. Parmelin's oracular statements, somewhat like those of Zeus in Zweimal Amphitryon, are designed to keep these wider implications before us, as for example in the following exchange between Parmelin and Noelle:

Parmelin: Es leidet das Land--und es leidet der einzelne.  
 Noelle: Die einzelnen sind doch das Volk. Wie sollte da der einzelne ausgeschlossen sein?  
 Parmelin: Die Last ist nur verschieden verteilt . . . . So will es wohl das Schicksal. Das seine Geißelhiebe austeilt wahllos, wohin sie treffen! (III, 854)

The black-clad Parmelin may be seen as the angel of death, fulfilling in this play the same role as the Gentlemen in Black in Gas.

The gloomy fatalism of Parmelin is balanced by Paul's view--manifestly Kaiser's too--that man is a free agent in control of his own destiny, and therefore responsible for all the ills, including war, which befall him. Paul sees Parmelin's philosophy, which Noelle shares, as the abnegation of the very thing which raises man above other creatures: the reasoning ability which allows him to make decisions and thereby direct his existence. Paul angrily decries Noelle's reliance on the wisdom of fate: "Das Schicksal--schieb' nicht dem Schicksal die Entscheidung zu. Der Mensch muß selbst entscheiden. Das macht ihn vor



aller Kreatur groß. Begib dich nicht des Menschentums"  
(III, 860).

In Paul's speech which closes the play, Kaiser strives to give universal significance to his introspective plot. Paul becomes another of Kaiser's martyrs in the cause of a better humanity, the symbolic vessel of which is Noelle's child. The child's innocence is to be preserved by teaching it only that which is good and concealing from it that which is evil: a naive idea which seems to contradict Paul's earlier insistence that man's fate should be governed by his own conscious decisions. The speech employs Kaiser's customary formulations for the desirable and the undesirable existence:

Wie wir hier miteinander uns verstrickten, das käm' wohl nie von deinen Lippen. Doch leichter macht das andre sich gesprächig. Verhüll' es dichter. Es ist der tiefere Betrug: die Schändung unsrer Erde. Treibt--blüht und reift sie nicht? Ist sie nicht gütig, indem sie unsern Schweiß annimmt? Wie danken wir für so viel Gunst? Wir schütten aus den Scheffeln, die sich füllen wollen, die Frucht ins Meer. Ins Salzmeer und ins Blutmeer. Wir schließen weite Scheuern, in die die Ernte einziehn will, mit Riegeln zu. Mit Riegeln und mit Schwertern. Das ist die Antwort auf der Erde Anerbieten--wir darben. Wir darben an Brot und Öl und Milch. So spotten wir des Sprießens--Blühens--Reifens. Lass' dein Kind nicht wissen, wie wir Unwürdigen waren. Lehr' es: der Erde würdig werden. (III, 869-870)

Die Spieldose, like Die Koralie, is a hybrid, whose potential for broader social import becomes lost in the psychological intricacies of the plot. Speeches such as the one quoted above demonstrate Kaiser's anti-militarism but are not made an integral part of the play itself; in



this context they stand out incongruously as obvious sermonizing. Kaiser's moral truths may be indisputable, but in Die Spieldose there is not the fusion of moral truth and dramatic truth which makes Der Soldat Tanaka so much more effective as a condemnation of militarism.

Kaiser was appalled as much by the social disruption caused by war as by the actual destruction it causes. He himself became one of the millions of refugees torn from their roots and cast adrift like so much flotsam. This theme finds its literal interpretation in Das Floß der Medusa. This play was completed in April, 1943, but owed its inception to an incident which occurred in September, 1940. A ship bound for Canada and filled with children evacuated from English cities was torpedoed and sunk. Only a few survivors escaped in lifeboats. This information is given by Kaiser in a prefatory note to the play (III, 771).

In a letter of 28th September, 1940 to his friend Cäsar von Arx, Kaiser enlarges on his plans for the play. There are significant differences between this early outline and the final version of the play. In the letter we read:

Wir erleben aus dem Verhalten und Munde der Kinder die äußerste Grausigkeit der Vorgänge. Der Evakuierung--Torpedierung . . . . Nun tiefe Betrachtungen über das Leben und den Abschied vom Leben. Aus Kindermund. Erschütternd. Verurteilung der Erwachsenen, die solche Schandtaten vollbringen: Kinder im Boot auf dem Meer treiben lassen. In den sicheren Untergang hinein . . . . Die Kinder werden gerettet. Nur einer lässt sich nicht retten. Er will nicht in das verfluchte Leben zurück. Er verabscheut es. Er wuchs und verneinte. Das ist die grosse Figur des Dramas: ein Kind--das uns Erwachsene ablehnt, anspeit--wie wir es verdienen.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>Quoted by Rudolph Adolf.



In this outline version, the suicide of Allan, the central figure, is motivated only by a general revulsion against life, and it is specifically the adult world which is decried for its callous treatment of innocent children. In the final version, however, we can see the extent to which Kaiser's despair deepened as he observed the progress of the war. No longer are the unseen adults the only villains and the children just innocent victims. Instead, the lifeboat is now seen as a microcosm of society, with the faults of the adult world already well developed in the children and compounded by a sickeningly self-righteous attitude, on the part of the children, that because of their youth and innocence they can do no wrong, yet are entitled to feel wronged. The only true innocents in the boat are the mute and defenceless Fückslein, who is so callously pushed overboard to satisfy Ann's superstitious whim, and Allan, who rejects a world peopled by such heartless monsters as these children. The play is a cry of despair and a prayer for redemption, concluding with the only formula which such a negative vision leaves open--the analogy of Christ's crucifixion.

Das Floß der Medusa takes the form of a "tragische Revue"<sup>18</sup> as Huder terms it, divided into seven episodes which correspond with the seven days during which the

---

<sup>18</sup>Walther Huder, p. 609.



lifeboat is adrift; these seven scenes are preceded by a prologue in which the flashing and roaring of explosions signify the sinking of the ship. At first it appears that there are twelve children in the boat, but in the course of the first day a thirteenth--a red-headed boy seemingly in a state of shock--is discovered, and is named Füchslein by the others. Kaiser gives names to only two of the other twelve: Allan and Ann.

Ann is horrified to find that they now number thirteen, for she assesses their chances of rescue in terms of her superstitions concerning this number. She combines her superstition with distorted biblical teachings to create her own cabalistic mumbo-jumbo by which she interprets everything that happens to them. By a wicked deceit involving a marriage ceremony with the trusting Allan, she contrives to have Füchslein pushed overboard. Allan is so mortified at her treachery and cruelty that he chooses certain death rather than return to a depraved civilization like that which he has come to know in the boat.

The poignancy of the drama as proposed in the letter to Arx is increased by Kaiser's subsequent adoption of the premise that even such young children--they are aged from ten to twelve--base their actions and reflections on a fabric of prejudice, superstition, delusion and self-interest, untempered by any human pity or generosity. So well do they mimic their misguided elders that they are already effective practitioners of the same vices. Above all, they eagerly pursue the letter of the moral or biblical



law--or their own garbled version of it--without regard to its spirit. Ann, the most forceful and most vicious of the children, is willing to commit murder because of her superstitious fear of the number thirteen, "die Judaszahl" as she calls it (III, 800). For Ann Christianity is a series of rituals with no actual bearing on life. She justifies the existence of sin by making it the raison d'être of the church. To her, the fact that clergy allow themselves to take sides and pray for victory in the war is proof of the invalidity of the commandment: thou shalt not kill, which Allan invokes in defence of Fückslein. She rationalizes to Allan:

Das ist doch ein mächtiger Staat von Predigern, der sonst nicht wäre, wenn die Gebote erfüllt würden. Vor allem dies Gebot: du sollst nicht töten. Dann hast du nie gesehen, wie unsere Prediger die Waffen weihen, mit denen immer mehr getötet wird als früher schon der Fall war . . . . Das ist in allen Ländern so, wo Christen wohnen. Deshalb sind sie Christen, weil sie nur mit geweihten Waffen töten. Aber töten, das müssen sie--und täten sie es nicht, so wäre in unsern Kirchen nichts mehr zu sagen. Das ist der Unterschied--das mußt du nur begreifen: Gebote sind für die Sonntagspredigt da, das hallt gewaltig in der Kirche--doch draussen ist alles anders: da ist das größte Übel dreizehn! (III, 802)

When the rescue 'plane comes, it proves to have been Allan's message in a vacuum flask and not Ann's superstition which has saved them. The pilot assumes Fückslein to have been a dog: "Ein hübscher Einfall: das Hündchen in menschliche Gesellschaft aufzunehmen," he declares (III, 817), little realizing that, on the contrary, a human being has been brutally denied this right. The irony mounts as he goes



on: "Ihr seht doch wie böse Teufel aus. Man müsste sich vor euch fürchten, wenn Mitleid nicht mehr am Platze wär!" (III, 817)

When Allan refuses to be rescued, the pilot, still unaware of Füchslein's human identity, tries to persuade him not to take Füchslein's death so seriously:

Pilot: Vergiß nicht, daß auch Menschen sterben.

Allan: Ja: sie töten--töten--töten. Sie haben sich vorgenommen, was sie nicht tun sollen, zu jeder Stunde und mit jedem Grund zu tun!

Pilot: Die Menschen werden einmal besser--und wie die Kinder sein.

Allan: Es werden die Kinder wie die Erwachsenen sein--weil sie als Kinder schon wie Erwachsene sind!

Pilot: Töten denn Kinder? (III, 818)

The rescue 'plane has to take off, leaving Allan at the mercy of an enemy 'plane, which he attracts on purpose with Füchslein's flashlight. In the Nachspiel, Allan, stricken by machine-gun bullets, is depicted as lying "WIE GEKREUZIGT," and the piece closes on a note of total resignation: "WIEDER EINMAL IST ES VOLLBRACHT" (III, 820).

To the present writer there seems little doubt that Füchslein--inoffensive, defenceless, but singled out from the other children by his physical appearance--symbolizes the Jews in Nazi Germany. His death is intended as a parallel to the atrocities committed against the Jews by the Nazis. Ann is the play's demagogue, its Hitler: irrational and hate-filled, yet a strong and persuasive character whom the weak-willed and indecisive will readily accept as a leader. Allan represents the true soul of Germany--crushed and betrayed. In broader terms, the



events of the play demonstrate "the irredeemable folly, brutality and credulity of man,"<sup>19</sup> those qualities which create and foster war and are in their turn nurtured by militaristic states intent on conquest and destruction.

---

<sup>19</sup>B.J. Kenworthy, Georg Kaiser (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 97.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The plays discussed in the last chapter testify to Kaiser's total despondency during the Second World War.

After completing Klawitter, Kaiser declared, in a letter to Cäsar von Arx, that he would write nothing more:

Ich habe mich zur Ruhe gesetzt und blicke zurück. Das war ein Leben--das war ein Schaffen. Im Grunde ein Radau um nichts. Und so soll man seine Erkenntnis vollenden: alles bereuen und verachten.<sup>1</sup>

However, the respite Kaiser gained through his outpouring of bitter hatred and contempt in Klawitter proved to be only a temporary lull, and this was not to be his swan song after all, for his restless urge to create refused to desert him. By this time his writing was more of a torment than a release, serving only to inflame his bitterness and nihilism. The plays written after Klawitter are all steeped in these emotions, with results which were discussed in the last chapter. In the light of Kaiser's own suicidal state of mind, the final gestures of Tanaka in Der Soldat Tanaka, Ernst Hoff in Klawitter, Paul in Die Spieldose and Allan in Das Floß der Medusa may all be seen as acts of deliberate self-immolation, grandiose in Tanaka's case but otherwise pathetic admissions of defeat. Kaiser's vision can no

---

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Rudolph Adolf, "Das Exilschaffen Georg Kaisers." Die Quelle, II, No. 5 (1948).



longer transcend reality, so all he can now do is to rail against the Nazi oppressors and the militancy they practise; whether he does so directly, as in NSDAP, or in the guise of Zeus, as in Zweimal Amphytryon, does not alter the fact that in these last plays the transcendental vision of Die Bürger von Calais has become an almost meaningless poetic artifice and constructive criticism been replaced by bitter invective. In the words of Hugo F. Koenigsgarten: "Er, dem der erste Weltkrieg die Zunge gelöst hatte, mußte den zweiten als die äußerste Negierung seiner Vision erfahren."<sup>2</sup>

The literal truth of Koenigsgarten's statement is evident from Kaiser's last poetry and letters, in which he himself scornfully recants the vision which he had once held sacred, and disavows the power of art, which he had once thought omnipotent. Thus Kaiser declares to Julius Marx:

Die Kunst ist Teufelswerk. Sie ist eine Produktion von Masken. Humanität bedeutet, Kunst nicht zu fördern, sondern auszurotten. Die Kunst untergräbt das mögliche Glück der Menschheit. Deshalb muß die Kunst liquidiert werden. (IV, 611)

In the same conversation he freely admits that this implies the failure of his own artistic efforts, and he deplores his own inconsistency in remaining alive when he ought really to begin to purge the world of art by liquidating himself as artist--"weil ich zu nichts anderem fähig war und

---

<sup>2</sup>Hugo F. Koenigsgarten, "Georg Kaiser," in Deutsche Dichter der Moderne, Ed. Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Schmidt, 1965), p. 478.



und fähig bin, als Kunst zu produzieren, anstatt Vernunfts-Chemikalien gegen die faschistische Pest zu erfinden" (IV, 611). Kaiser's admission of defeat on behalf of art and humanitarianism is repeated more succinctly in the crudely vituperative poem which begins with the words, "Vaterland, dich verfluch' ich . . ."; there Kaiser says simply and symbolically: "Meine Taube erstickte" (IV, 732).

As we look back on the succession of plays in which Kaiser attacks militancy, we can see that his positive solutions depend on the triumph of an individual, and that this device is both the reason for and the result of Kaiser's constant emphasis of the principle of individuation. This explains the importance of the warrior, who, as we saw in Chapter III, provides Kaiser with the means to individualize the negative pole in his dialectical argument. It was this technique which made possible the victory of peaceful constructive civilization over militancy in Die Bürger von Calais.

Unfortunately for Kaiser, his gospel of individuation also contained, from the very first, the germ of the ultimate disillusionment described above. For the militancy which he attacked was and is a collective, not an individual, phenomenon, and while Kaiser's symbols, such as the uniform, the suit of armour or the "Lederkopf," emphasize this fact, the dialectical technique described above refutes it, by substituting the individual for the mass. Consequently, Kaiser's positive conclusions, such as that of Die Bürger



von Calais, for all their spiritual uplift and dramatic synthesis, have little validity beyond the controlled world of Kaiser's stage.

Kaiser's belief that positive human values can find expression only through individuals is complemented by his paranoiac mistrust of mankind in the mass. So extreme is this mistrust that, as a matter of course, Kaiser ascribes militaristic motives and objectives to the archetype of collectivism: the state. For Kaiser the ethos of the state is typified by such figures as Duguesclins or the Gentlemen in Black of Gas, not by Eustache; only through the intercession of the artist can a more harmonious vision of society be evoked. What Kaiser considers the norm he summarizes as follows:

Ist eine Welt, die nicht ohne Polizei leben kann, sind Menschen, die nur unter der Fuchtel einer Drohung halbwegs anständig bleiben, erfreuliche Angelegenheiten? Vielleicht ist der Mensch als Einzelindividuum wirklich gut, aber in der Geschlossenheit der Masse, als Gesellschaft, als Staat ist er alles eher als das. Ich habe einmal zu formulieren versucht, als was ich den Staat, diese zwangsmäßige Notgemeinschaft einer Menschheit, die ohne Zwang von Gesetz und Gummiknütel sich wahrscheinlich gegenseitig auffressen würde, ansehe: als einen Mißbrauch des Heimatgefühls. (IV, 607-608)

In a conversation with Julius Marx, Kaiser enlarges on his pessimistic view of the modern state:

Die heutigen Formen des Staatswesens beweisen die Dekadenz des Menschengeschlechts . . . . Da die heutigen Staatsmänner und Staatsbürokraten nichts anderes als Kloaken-Gestalten sind, die Völker jedoch diese Bande sanktionieren, kann man die Menschheit kaum anders als eine bestialische Horde bezeichnen, deren Untergang wünschenswert ist . . . . (IV, 614)



It is not difficult to see why Kaiser had to conclude: "Im Grunde genommen gibt es keine staatlichen Lösungen. Es gibt nur menschliche Lösungen. Diese aber werden durch den Staat unmöglich gemacht" (IV, 614). The situation faced by Kaiser and the idealized individuals in his plays, as they combat the militancy of the state, is like that of the man from the country in Kafka's parable "Vor dem Gesetz:" a human solution beckons from afar, but the obstacles preventing achievement of it remain insuperable.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. Primary Sources

Unless otherwise stated in the text, all quotations from Kaiser's writings are taken from:

Kaiser, Georg. Werke, ed. Walther Huder, 6 Vols., Frankfurt/M., Berlin, Wien: Propyläen, 1971-1972.

### 2. Secondary Sources

Adolf, Rudolph. "Das Exilschaffen Georg Kaisers." Die Quelle, II, No. 5 (1948), 55-62.

Arnold, Armin. "Georg Kaiser," in Expressionismus als Literatur, ed. Wolfgang Rothe. Bern, München: Francke, 1969.

Barracough, G. The Origins of Modern Germany. Oxford, 1967.

Becher, Johannes R. Verteidigung der Poesie. Berlin: Aufbau, 1960.

Beer, Willy. "Untersuchungen zur Problematik des expressionistischen Dramas unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Dramatik Georg Kaisers und Fritz von Unruhs." Diss., Breslau, 1934.

Berendsohn, Walter. Die humanistische Front. Zürich: Europa, 1946.

Bergfeld, Heidemarie. "Die Hellenische Trilogie Georg Kaisers und die Gestaltung des Mythos." Diss., n.p., n.d.

Buchheim, Hans. Totalitäre Herrschaft: Wesen und Merkmale. München: Kösel, 1962.

Diebold, Bernhard. Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser. Frankfurt a.M., 1924.

Duwe, Wilhelm. Ausdrucksformen Deutscher Dichtung. Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1965.



- Duwe, Wilhelm. Deutsche Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts. 2 vols. Zürich: Füssli, 1962.
- Elbe, Anna Margarethe. "Technische und soziale Probleme in der Dramenstruktur Georg Kaisers." Diss., Köln, 1959.
- Fivian, Eric Albert. Georg Kaiser und seine Stellung im Expressionismus. München, 1946.
- Fix, Wolfgang. "Die Ironie im Drama Georg Kaisers." Diss., Heidelberg, 1951.
- Freyhan, Max. Das Drama der Gegenwart. Berlin: Mittler, 1922.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Georg Kaisers Werk. Berlin: Schmiede, 1926.
- Fritze, Hanns H. "Über das Problem der Zivilisation im Schaffen Georg Kaisers." Diss., Universität Freiburg.
- Fruchter, Moses Joseph. "The Social Dialectic in Georg Kaiser's Dramatic Works." Diss., Pennsylvania, 1933.
- Fürdauer, Viktor. "Georg Kaisers dramatisches Gesamtwerk." Diss., Wien, 1949.
- Goulden, William Owen. "Die Problematik der Wirklichkeit in den Dramen von Georg Kaiser." Diss., Köln, 1953.
- Gröll, Hans-Dieter. "Antithetik und Doppelgängermotiv im Drama Georg Kaisers." Diss., Köln, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Untersuchungen zur Dialektik in der Dichtung Georg Kaisers." Diss., Köln, 1965.
- Hammacher, Emil. Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur. Leipzig: Teubner, 1914.
- Huder, Walther. "Die politischen und sozialen Themen der Exildramatik Georg Kaisers." Sinn und Form, XIII (1961), 596-614.
- Jetter, Marianne R. "Some Thoughts on Kleist's Amphitryon and Kaiser's Zweimal Amphitryon." German Life and Letters, XIII (1959-1960), 178-189.
- Kauf, Robert. "Faith and Despair in Georg Kaiser's Work." Diss., Chicago, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Georg Kaiser's Social Tetralogy and the Social Ideas of Walther Rathenau." Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXXVII, 311-317.



- Kaufmann, F.W. "Zum Problem der Arbeit bei Otto Ludwig, Gerhart Hauptmann und Georg Kaiser." Monatshefte, XL (1948), 321-327.
- Kenworthy, Brian J. Georg Kaiser. Oxford: Blackwell, 1957.
- Koenigsgarten, Hugo F. Georg Kaiser. Potsdam: Kiepenhauer, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Georg Kaiser, The Leading Playwright of Expressionism." German Life and Letters, III (1938-1939), 195-205.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Georg Kaiser," in Deutsche Dichter der Moderne: Ihr Leben und Werk, ed. Benno von Wiese. Berlin: Schmidt, 1965.
- Kuxdorf, Manfred. "Das Bild des Menschen im dramatischen Werk Georg Kaisers." Diss., Edmonton, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Die Suche nach dem Menschen im Drama Georg Kaisers. Bern: Lang, 1971.
- Lämmert, Eberhard. "Georg Kaiser. Die Bürger von Calais," Das deutsche Drama vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart. Benno von Wiese, Vol. II, Vom Realismus bis zur Gegenwart. Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1960.
- Last, R.W. "Symbol and Struggle in Georg Kaiser's Die Bürger von Calais." German Life and Letters, XIX, (1956-1966), 201-209.
- Lewin, Ludwig. Die Jagd nach dem Erlebnis. Ein Buch über Georg Kaiser. Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1926.
- Linick, Leroy Marion. "Der Subjektivismus im Werke Georg Kaisers." Diss., Zürich, 1937.
- Loram, Ian C. "Georg Kaiser's Swan Song: Griechische Dramen." Monatshefte, XLIX (1957), 23-30.
- Mann, Otto. "Georg Kaiser," in Expressionismus. Ed. Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann. Heidelberg: Rothe, 1956.
- Martens, Gunter. Vitalismus und Expressionismus. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971.
- Meese, Arnold. "Das Denkspiel Georg Kaisers: Grundzüge der Dichtungstheorie." Diss., München, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Die theoretischen Schriften Georg Kaisers." Diss., München, 1965.



Neermann, Gerd. "Stil und Dramenform der Hauptwerke Georg Kaisers." Diss., Tübingen, 1950.

Omankowski, Willibald. Georg Kaiser und seine besten Bühnenwerke. Berlin: Schneider, 1922.

Paulsen, Wolfgang. Expressionismus und Aktivismus. Bern: Gotthelf, 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Georg Kaiser im expressionistischen Raum: Zum Problem einer Neudeutung seines Werkes." Monatshefte, L (1958), 287-303.

\_\_\_\_\_. Georg Kaiser. Die Perspektiven seines Werkes. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960.

Rothe, Wolfgang, ed. Expressionismus als Literatur. Bern: Francke, 1969.

Rüstow, Alexander. Ortsbestimmung der Gegenwart. 3 vols. Stuttgart: Rentsch, 1957.

Samuel, Richard and R. Hinton Thomas. Expressionism in German Life, Literature and the Theatre. Philadelphia: Saifer, 1971.

Schürer, Ernst. Georg Kaiser. New York: Twayne, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. Georg Kaiser und Bertolt Brecht: Über Leben und Werk. Frankfurt/M.: Athenäum, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Metapher, Allegorie und Symbol in den Dramen Georg Kaisers." Diss., Yale, 1966.

Schütz, Adolf M. "Georg Kaisers Nachlaß: eine Untersuchung über die Entwicklungslinien im Lebenswerk des Dichters." Diss., Bern, 1951.

Simmel, Georg. Philosophische Kultur. Leipzig: Kröner, 1919.

Soergel, Albert. Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit. 4th ed. II, Im Banne des Expressionismus. Leipzig: Voigtländer, 1927.

Sokel, Walter. Der literarische Expressionismus. München: Langen, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The other face of Expressionism." Monatshefte, XLVII (1955), 1-10.



Steudel, Gottfried. "Der zentrale Konflikt und seine Lösung in ausgewählten Schauspielen von Georg Kaiser." Diss., Potsdam, 1963.

Sydow, Eckart von. Die deutsche expressionistische Kultur und Malerei. Berlin, 1920.

Urrisk, Otto Robert. "Georg Kaiser, das literarische Phänomen des Expressionismus." Diss., Vienna, 1948.

Wiese, Peter von. "Georg Kaiser und das Problem der dramatischen Form." Diss., Köln, 1955.













**B30123**